TEMPLE ORGANISATION AND WORSHIP

AMONG THE PUṢṬIMĀRGĪYA-VAIṢṆAVAS OF UJJAIN

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ABSTRACT

TEMPLE ORGANISATION AND WORSHIP AMONG THE PUSTIMĀRGĪYA-VAISNAVAS OF UJJAIN

The bhakti sect of Vallabhācārya, founded by the preceptor-saint of that name in the last decade of the fifteenth century AD, otherwise known as Puṣṭimārga or the Path of Grace, continues to attract an enthusiastic following in northern and western India. To the outsider, Puṣṭimārga is manifestly 'this-worldly' in its orientation. For one thing, there are no ascetics; the gurus are hereditary descendants of Vallabhācārya by virtue of which they are highly revered by their disciples. For another, the bhakti ideals of detachment, disinterestedness and dedication receive palpable expression in the lavish and energetic worship of temple deities which are regarded as actual manifestations of the infant Krishna.

This thesis, based largely on fieldwork conducted among devotees in Ujjain city, central India, gives a detailed account of routine temple life and worship. At the same time it explores the nature of the correspondence between the spiritual and phenomenal worlds epitomised in the temple as the celestial abode of Krishna and in its paraphernalia as embodiments of the exuberant emotions experienced by participants in the divine līlā. Of particular significance in this respect is the special emphasis which devotees place on sacred food and feasting. The temple is geared to a redistributive economy in which the circulation of ritual commodities, including sacred food, becomes an elaborate expression for the sharing of divine sentiments.

But as many devotees point out, this altruistic system of worship is always open to abuse from those persons who would exploit it for selfish ends.

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ABBREVIATIONS

See bibliography for details of publication.

CBC - Caurāsī Baiṭhaka Caritra.

CVV - Caurāsī Vaiṣṇavan kī Vārtā of Shrī Harirāyjī.

DBVV - Do Sau Bāvan Vaiṣṇavan kī Vārtā of Shrī Harirāyjī.

NGV - Shrī Ācāryajī Mahāprabhun kī Nijvārtā Gharū Vārtā.

SNPV - Shrī Nāthjī kī Prākaṭya Vārtā of Shrī Harirāy Mahānubhāva.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

For the most part I have endeavoured to be consistent with the scholarly system of transliteration normally used for the Hindī and Sanskrit languages. Nevertheless, there are minor exceptions. I have omitted the final 'a' in some of the oft-repeated Hindī words so as to prevent those who are unfamiliar with the language from placing an undue stress in pronunciation; e.g. prasāda, svarūpa and sevaka are rendered prasād, svarūp and sevak. Some of the well-known proper names, such as Krishna, Vishnu and Vaishnavite, have been retained in their Anglicised forms. Strictly speaking, the term Puṣṭimārgi, used here to denote a devotee of, or something pertaining to, the Sect of Vallabhācārya, is also Anglicised; the correct form is Puṣṭimārgīya, though I have avoided the latter spelling on the grounds that it is somewhat cumbersome.

PREFACE

In April 1977 I travelled to the sacred and ancient city of Ujjain in central India with the intention of examining social and cultural aspects of that highly emotional and fascinating approach to the divine known as Bhaktimārga, the Path of Loving Devotion. My enthusiasm had been kindled by reports of a revival of Vaishnavite bhakti among urban dwellers and of the accommodation of its beliefs and practices to the values and conditions of contemporary urban life (Singer, 1966; Holmström, 1971; Pocock, 1973). Soon after my arrival in Ujjain I decided to shift slightly the focus of my enquiry: instead of choosing a small and relatively modern devotional cult, I brought my attention to bear on temple worship among devotees of one of the major Vaishnavite devotional sects, known as Vallabhācārya Sampradāya or Puṣṭimārga, which has a following of some few thousand in the city. Much of the available literature in English on the established Vaishnavite sects concentrates on their medieval florescence while virtually ignoring their present-day manifestations. As a result we are left with an exaggerated impression of sectarian decline and latter-day atrophy. In the case of Puṣṭimārga the picture is coloured by graphic descriptions of the moral degeneration of the sect during the last century. Nevertheless, from the very outset I was particularly impressed by the richness, vitality and distinctiveness of the ritual traditions preserved in the Puṣṭimārgi temples and commenced fieldwork encouraged by the certain knowledge that there was much to observe and record that was unknown outside of this highly influential north Indian devotional sect.

I am grateful to the Social Science Research Council for providing the finance which enabled me to conduct fieldwork in India between April

1977 and August 1978, and also for providing the finance necessary for the writing of this thesis. The same body allowed me a grant to study Hindī at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, before I left for the field. I am also grateful to the Central Research Fund Committee of the University of London for the loan of a tape-recorder and for a grant towards the cost of equipment and assistance in the field.

Special thanks go to my supervisors, Professor A.C. Mayer and Dr. Audrey Cantlie of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, School of Oriental and African Studies, for reading the script and making many valuable suggestions as to how certain ideas might be improved. I consider myself fortunate to have received their warm support and continuous encouragement over the years, both as an undergraduate and as a post-graduate student. In addition I would like to thank staff and colleagues in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, SOAS, and also in the Department of Indology and the Modern Languages and Literatures of South Asia (Hindī section) for their valuable comments on the material.

Of those who helped me during my stay in Ujjain, I would like to acknowledge the assistance, academic and practical, of Dr. P.T. Thomas, principal, Indore School of Social Work; Professor Venkatachalam of the Sanskrit Department, Vikrama University, Ujjain; and Dr. V.S. Wakankar of Vikrama Kīrti Mandir, Vikrama University, Ujjain. I am also grateful to Professor Govardhannāth Shukla of the Department of Hindī, Aligarh Muslim University, and to Dr. Richard Barz, Department of South Asian and Buddhist Studies, Australian National University, for their hospitality during my visit to Braj and for passing on some of their knowledge of Vaishnavite philosophy and literature. My heartfelt thanks go to my research assistant, Shrī Yogesh Chandra Rawat: I shall not forget his enthusiasm and friendship.

Those Puṣṭimārgis who extended to me their kindness and hospitality are too numerous to mention individually so I thank them collectively. Nevertheless, I feel that I must make some exceptions. I express my

sincerest gratitude to His Holiness Gosvāmī 108 Shrī Prathameshjī Mahārāja who conveyed to me something of his profound spiritual knowledge; also to his disciple, Shrī Shyāmdās (Stephen Schaffer). Of those devotees living in Ujjain, fondest memories are reserved for Shrī Krishna Kumar Rāval, Shrī Devendra Bhāī and Shrī Bherulāl jī Mukhiyā who allowed me an insight into the spirit of Puṣṭimārga as practised.

Further, I would like to thank Mrs. B. Nelson-Smith for preparing the typescript and for making many useful suggestions on matters of presentation.

Finally, to my wife, Vivienne, who accompanied me to Ujjain and who has shared in all aspects of the present endeavour, I owe more than words can say.

MAPS, PLAND AND FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is a social anthropological study of temple organisation and worship among a lay community of Krishna worshippers living in Ujjain city, central India, and belonging to Vallabhācārya Sampradāya, being the Hindu devotional sect which gave permanent expression to the teachings and revelations of the medieval preceptor-saint Vallabhācārya (1479-1531 AD). Empirically the study should provide a useful addition to an ethnographic record which is seriously deficient in accounts of the major Hindu devotional sects (notable exceptions include Deleury, 1960; Pocock, 1973, Burghart, 1978b). Theoretically it is intended as a contribution to our limited understanding of the nature of sectarianism in the Indian setting. It will therefore be appropriate to begin with a brief outline of sectarianism in India together with a review of some relevant issues previously raised in the sociological study of sects in general and of Hindu sects in particular.

The Path of Devotion and the Path of Grace

Vallabhācārya Sampradāya is one of a multiplicity of Hindu sects associated with the devotional approach to the divine known as Bhaktimārga, the Path (mārga) of Loving Devotion (bhakti). Generally what devotees of these sects share in common is the conviction that selfless and passionate love for a loving and compassionate deity, conceived either as Shiva or more usually as Vishnu in his incarnations of Rām and Krishna, is the easiest and pre-eminent means of salvation. Where they avowedly differ from those Hindus who follow the orthodox spiritual paths of Actions (karmamārga) and Knowledge (jñānamārga) is in the low premium which they attach to the performance of conventional Brahmanical rituals or the pursuit

of contemplative knowledge as means of securing the soul's release from the transient world of samsāra (the round of rebirths), and of limited efficacy, since the spiritual advancement of the soul is ultimately dependent upon divine grace, voluntarily bestowed. Indeed, initiates of Vallabhācārya Sampradāya have stressed reliance on divine grace over and against self-effort to the extent that they have named their faith Puṣṭimārga, or the Path of Grace (puṣṭi), as a distinct and superior form of the Path of Devotion.

The origins of bhakti are subject to much scholarly speculation and need not concern us here, suffice it to say that its earliest formal expression as a path to salvation appears in the Bhavagad Gītā where it is expounded to Arjun by the warrior-god Krishna. But it was several centuries later during the first millenium AD in the Tamil lands of south India that the relatively restrained bhakti of the Gītā was transformed into a highly emotional cult of love and self-abandonment to a personal god of grace. These sentiments are particularly pronounced in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, a Sanskrit epic composed around the ninth century AD, the tenth book of which describes the earthly life of Lord Krishna, no longer the awesome figure of the Gītā, but now the beloved foster-child of King Nand and Mother Yashodā, and the lusty cowherd, Gopāl, who steals the hearts of the milkmaids (gopīs) of Braj.[1] This most familiar of Indian mythic themes became central to those devotional sects which identified Krishna as the Supreme God. The intense love and longing for the handsome cowherd experienced by the gopīs and culminating in the Rās Līlā when he links arms with them in an amorous round-dance, is symbolic of the soul's love and longing for God which God returns in full measure by passionately embracing the soul. The Bengālī saint Caitanya (1486-1533) is probably the most celebrated exponent of this love-form of devotion. He is said to have identified himself with Rādhā, the foremost of the gopīs and favourite of Krishna, or as Rādhā and Krishna bound in a single body (Dimock, 1966:147) Vallabhācārya, his

contemporary, also approved of this approach but preferred to lay even greater emphasis on the worship of Krishna as a mischievous and ostensibly helpless infant so that devotees could emulate the maternal affections of Yashodā as she lovingly cares for her darling foster-child. The maternal sentiment of devotion is still a distinctive feature of temple and domestic worship in Puṣṭimārga, representing what devotees regard as the purest expression of selfless love and concern for the happiness and welfare of a personal god.

The popular success of south Indian devotionalism, which later inspired the likes of Caitanya and Vallabhācārya in the north, owed much to the simplicity and universal appeal of its teachings and practices as opposed to the elitist rites of Brahmanical religion and the arduous mental and physical exertions of the renouncer. On the one hand, bhakti by-passed the hierarchy and ritualism of the Vedic sacrifices, monopolised by Brahmans and sponsored by their wealthy twice-born patrons, by teaching that salvation was open to all, regardless of caste, wealth or sex, through the sincere and spontaneous expression of love for the divine.[2] On the other hand, bhakti provided a more practicable alternative to the disciplined path followed by the renouncer (sannyāsi) by teaching that the renunciation of desire, normally considered an essential prerequisite for the higher stages of spiritual striving, could also be achieved by the ordinary householder, not by renouncing actions, which in their results only serve to bind men to mortality, but by relinquishing desire for their fruits by dedicating all of one's efforts to the selfless service of the divine.[3]

But a faith which sought to convince humankind that the divine paid no heed to social qualifications in dispensing grace and which upheld the equality of all recipients of grace in the eyes of God would have remained a private matter between the individual and the object of his devotion, having limited tangible repercussions, had it not been for the embodiment of its beliefs and practices in those groupings which are normally referred

to as 'sects'. Among the most popular and influential were the Vaishnavite sects[4] which emerged during the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries in response to the teachings of such celebrated preceptors as Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka, Rāmānanda, Vallabha, Caitanya, and many others. Of these, the sects of Rāmānuja and Madhva became firmly established in south India, while the rest contributed to a great Vaishnavite revival in the north which reached its most fervent and creative pitch during the years of the Mughal supremacy (early sixteenth to eighteenth centuries).

These preceptors saw to the practical implementation of devotional ideals by initiating disciples from a wide range of castes and by disregarding caste distinctions among them. The idea of the disciple group - the embryonic sect - as a highly intimate and close-knit fellowship of the faithful was a logical extension of bhakti ethics. If the divine is to be treated as an object of selfless love and service, then surely the same goes for one's fellow disciples as recipients of divine grace and embodiments of divine love. If devotion can transcend the gap between man and the divine, then it can easily transcend the relatively trivial distinctions existing among men. In a society renowned for its hierarchical order, the emerging bhakti sects were remarkable inasmuch as they aspired to forms of social organisation based on egalitarian principles. Also notable is the fact that despite their common heritage, their emphasis on devotion and their reverence for Vishnu as Rām or Krishna, they have always maintained their independence, exhibiting a diversity of philosophical convictions, ritual styles and institutional forms. In view of their variety, widespread popularity and divergence from orthodox Brahmanical religion and the hierarchical socio-ritual order, the Vaishnavite bhakti sects present a particularly rich and intriguing field for sociological and social anthropological investigation.

The Study of Sects East and West

Sociologists have long evinced a keen interest in the study of sects

for several reasons. For one thing, many sects stand out as movements of socio-religious protest whose members deliberately dissociate themselves from orthodox society and its norms. For another, there is much evidence to suggest that sectarian activity increases dramatically during periods of rapid social and cultural transition. Sects have been considered not only as by-products of change but also as powerful agents of socio-cultural collapse and reintegration. Hence they are often described as reformist, radical and even revolutionary.

One outcome of this interest is that sects have become central to some highly influential and refined thinking on the subject of social process. Particularly outstanding are the contributions of Max Weber on the relationship between Protestant ideology and the rise of capitalism (1930), on the concept of 'charisma' and its 'routinization' (1947, pp.358f.), and on the analytical distinction between 'church' and 'sect' types. His student, Troeltsch, further developed the church-sect dichotomy with reference to medieval and Reformation Christianity. He identified a dialectical process at work involving the church with its tendency to seek a compromise with the world and the sect with its tendency to reject the world in response to the transcendent call of the Gospel.[5] Since, many have been concerned with the elaboration of Troeltsch's dichotomy while also stressing its limitations when applied outside of the early European context.[6] Focusing on America with its lack of an established universal church, Niebuhr found it necessary to introduce the concept 'denomination' as an intermediate type and 'denominationalism' as the process by which sects undergo reconciliation with the wider society. For Niebuhr sects seldom retain their radical and distinctive identities beyond the first generation. Rather they become denominations: voluntary adherence diminishes as members' children begin to 'hold their convictions as a heritage', while increasing economic prosperity among members means that they are more likely to accept the standards and morality of the prevailing society.[7] In the

last three decades scholars have drawn extensively upon the theoretical findings of Weber, Troeltsch and Niebuhr in pursuing dynamic analyses of sect development (see, in particular, O'Dea, 1964). It is principally with reference to their findings that the term 'sect' has been adapted as a sociological category having a tolerably precise definition.[8]

But what is significant so far as we are concerned here is that sociologists have formulated their theories and typologies almost exclusively with reference to Christendom, a fact that raises serious doubts as to their cross-cultural applicability. Troeltsch's church-sect dichotomy is a clear case in point. In acknowledging this problem, Wilson has warned that if the comparative study of religious organisations is to make useful progress, then it must avoid 'categories dictated too specifically by the characteristics of a particular theological tradition' (1969:361). Nevertheless, in presenting his own theologically neutral typology, he is bound to admit that his illustrative range is constrained by the Christian bias of the material at his disposal.[9] As a result of this general bias, the range of Indian (and other non-Christian) religious collectivities which appear to exhibit some affinities with sects in Christendom as separatist and voluntarist groupings are generally ignored in the sociological literature. There is a need to determine the nature and extent of such affinities as well as to identify those aspects which are peculiar to the Indian situation.

In the latter respect Wilson has rightly insisted that the connotations of the term 'sect' differ according to the organisational structures of the different parent religions. The Christian church is a highly cohesive and centralised body with the result that 'dissenters who deliberately departed from the accepted beliefs and practices of the faith were more emphatically distinguishable... Sects were regarded as opposed to the church...' (1970:15). By contrast, in Hinduism, which is diffuse, uncentralised and pluralist, sectarianism exists in a much more 'limited sense' with diverse traditions

of worship existing side by side, whose devotees have not felt the need for mutual separation as have their Christian counterparts (ibid., p.14). Wilson explains that there are movements like the Lingāyat (a Shaivite movement from Mysore) which are loosely described as sects merely on the grounds of their character as 'movements cultivating particular styles of devotion'. This reminds us of a distinction that has elsewhere been conceptualised as the difference between 'organised' or 'institutional' religion on the one hand, and 'pervasive' or 'diffused' religion on the other.[10] In Christianity both church and sect are clearly circumscribed institutions having different adherents and being differentiated from the wider society. They are mutually opposed and mutually exclusive organisations. Alternatively, those beliefs and practices included within Hinduism are diffused throughout the social order imparting a sacred or religious character to its social institutions (including caste and family), while the so-called sects assume the status of separate social organisations with their own theologies, cults and specialised functionaries. In view of the traditional polarisation of Christian church and sects, we can understand what Wilson means when he suggests that the latter are more 'emphatically distinguishable'. But we should not be tempted to underestimate or misunderstand the distinctiveness of many Hindu sects. In Christianity sectarian distinctiveness is a consequence of the polarisation of mutually exclusive institutions, whereas in Hinduism it is a consequence of the differentiation of specific religious institutions from religious practices which are diffused within the total social order. It could be argued that because Hinduism is pervasive, syncretic and uncentralised, the very presence of religious groups that are highly organised, centralised and exclusive as regards belief, gives them a special prominence, and that this prominence is due more to their consolidation from within than their opposition from without.

Blame for the neglect of Indian sects should not be placed entirely at

the feet of Western sociological theorists, for the available accounts written by those who have specialised in Hindu sects and cults have been in many ways inadequate for their purposes. The study of Vaishnavite and Shaivite sects has been largely restricted to an appreciation of doctrinal and philosophical themes as espoused in original sectarian texts. Although we remain deeply indebted to Indologists like H.H. Wilson (1861), Bhandarkar (1913) and Grierson (1915) for their pioneering work in matters of theological description and classification, we are also aware that both they and their 'textualist' successors have treated aspects of sect organisation, development, and ritual practice as little more than incidental to their main task of determining the distinctive contributions made by sects, or rather their founders, to the advancement of devotional thought. We can sympathise with one social historian, Burton Stein, when he complains that scholarly neglect of social issues has left great gaps in our knowledge of the emergence of the bhakti sects such that work done in this area 'still produces in the researcher the "thrill of excitement" that results from examining a new field of knowledge'.[11]

There is, however, one notable and "exciting" exception to this trend. I refer to Dumont's ingenious attempt to organise some of the main findings of Indology within a sociological perspective in order to obtain an overall systematic understanding of the proliferation of devotional sects in India.[12] Particularly relevant here are his comments regarding the role of the renouncer in the foundation of sects and the relationship between caste and sect. The key to Hinduism, he argues, is to be found in the dialogue between the renouncer and the man-in-the-world. The ideas inherent in bhakti are essentially derived from the renouncer who in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment forsakes the world of the strict interdependence of castes and becomes an individual outside the world. By virtue of his unique asocial position he is capable of individual and creative thought while his independently achieved insights are adopted and adapted by the

man-in-the-world as the voluntary religion of bhakti. It is in this sense that Dumont refers to devotional religion as 'a combination of the ideals of the renouncer and of the man-in-the-world...an invention of the renouncer...a revolutionary doctrine since it transcends both caste and renunciation' (1980:282).

Herein lies an intimate connection between the sect and the institution of renunciation since devotees of a sect, inspired by the renouncer, can choose to 'leave the world from within' by renouncing the fruits of their actions rather than actions themselves. But the inventor of bhakti does not become redundant in this development, for men-in-the-world continue to benefit from his insights by accepting him as their guru. Though initially situated outside the world, the renouncer is reabsorbed back into it. Most of the bhakti sects have evolved this two-tier structure comprising a core of guru-renouncers and their lay disciples drawn from householders.

Pocock has stressed the irony of this change in the sannyāsi's role. Sects survive precisely because they frustrate the ambitions of their founders: 'How does it come about, then, that sometimes he becomes the revered, often deified, head and founder of what we call a sect, with its own scriptures, rituals and temples?' (1973:96). It would appear that the process of reabsorption has been particularly noticeable in Puṣṭimārga since the founder and his successors have all been householders themselves. According to tradition, Vallabha originally intended to lead an ascetic life until ordered by Lord Krishna to reveal to men in the world the Path of Grace by initiating disciples and by marrying in order to beget successors who could continue the mission after him.

The accommodation of the renouncer is one instance of a general process which Dumont describes as 'the progressive...aggregation by orthodox tendencies of elements introduced by the heterodox' (1980:269). Hindu society has given birth to a variety of heretical movements and thereafter managed to reabsorb them. Accommodation is possible because neither the

renouncer nor the sect have denied worldly religion and caste. For householders, bhakti is an optional extra, superimposed upon worldly religion, such that devotees are simultaneously members of caste and sect. The two could only come into conflict if the sect made itself exclusive vis-à-vis caste, which rarely happens. Hence the sects come to reflect and contain the distinctions and values of the pervasive hierarchical order. Yet something of the attitude of the renouncer remains: caste values become relativized in the context of the sect. 'The caste order continues to be respected, even if, in the light of sectarian truth, it is seen as a profane concern' (p.285).

It is to Dumont's credit that he has managed to present a unitary view of Hinduism by discerning a dialectic which relates its diverse tendencies. Indeed, there are some interesting comparisons to be drawn between his own methods and findings and those of Western sociologists who have studied processes by which sects achieve a modus vivendi with the world. It might be fruitful to explore to what extent the 'churchly' attributes identified by Troeltsch in Christianity have their equivalents in India, only concealed and merged within the Hindu social order. Another interesting comparison is that between the capacity of Brahmanism to cope with the world-negating institution of renunciation by including it within worldly religion as the fourth and last stage of the life of a Brahman (Dumont, 1980:274), and the capacity of the early Catholic church to control deviant world-rejecting tendencies through the institutions of monasticism and sainthood:

> The saint and his followers were either contemporaneously or posthumously accorded special recognition. Their religious deviance was institutionalized generally without challenge to the mainstream religious tradition (Robertson,1970:79).

East-West comparisons aside, it is first necessary for us to focus on Hindu sects in an Indian context. The notion that caste values suffer relativization under the influence of sects requires further study, as Dumont readily admits. Pocock has taken up the idea in his analysis of

sects in Gujarāt, pointing out that caste values are preserved within the sect but contained within and contingent upon a theology which is essentially egalitarian in spirit (1973, pp. 95 and 158). Following on from this, it would also be useful to examine the manner in which the altruistic and equalitarian values of bhakti are expressed to articulate the structure of man-divine and interpersonal relationships within sects, particularly in view of the fact that such ideologies have largely been ignored by social anthropologists in their eagerness to understand the principles of hierarchy and impurity (see Parry, 1974). We shall see in the chapters which follow that there is much in the ideology and practice of sectarian devotionalism that cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of hierarchy and purity/impurity, at least insofar as these concepts have been understood by many social anthropologists.

The Sect as Sampradāya: An Ethnographic Approach

Although Dumont assures us that his formulations are abstracted from the direct study of 'a small Hindu group', he provides little in the way of basic ethnography, leaving others to test the validity of his ideas with reference to the latter-day beliefs, activities and institutions of sects and sectaries in India's towns and villages.

Generally speaking, anthropologists have developed a special interest verging on a preoccupation in rural manifestations of inter-caste and intra-caste behaviour, while they have largely ignored those social collectivities which exhibit such notable divergences in values and in organisational principles. It may well be that in many of the villages selected for study the established sects have not been represented, or else they have been only peripheral to village life, merely one facet of the total socio-ritual complex and not warranting special attention in themselves. Besides, anyone intending to focus on the internal organisation and culture of an individual sect at the rural level would find fieldwork somewhat difficult in view of the wide horizontal extensions of many sects.

Instead, it is in the towns, cities and bustling centres of pilgrimage that sectarian activity and culture receives its fullest, most intense and concentrated expression, for these are the places where the major temple and monastic institutions are maintained and where great preceptors preside over matters secular and spiritual. It is within the precincts of such specialised institutions that the role of devotee assumes prominence and tends to dominate all transactions and interactions between co-sectaries. Moreover, there has long been a close correspondence between sect-organised Vaishnavism and civic strata in India, Puṣṭimārga being no exception; members of the urban merchant and artisan castes of northern and western India have long been among its most numerous and enthusiastic supporters.

One notices in cosmopolitan pilgrimage centres like Ujjain a profusion of overlapping religious orientations representing varying degrees of institutional consolidation. In such circumstances the problem of diversity is most apparent and means of reducing it are welcome. In his analysis of sectarianism in Gujarāt, David Pocock has suggested a useful model based on the principle that 'membership of a sect can mean different things according to the way in which the essential fact, the relationship with the guru, is mediated' (1973:99). The most diffuse form is indicated by the terms Vaishnavism and Shaivism; yet as I have already explained (footnote 4), and as Pocock implies, the terms are much too vague and inclusive. A man may call himself a Vaishnavite merely because he regularly visits a temple housing an image of Krishna and 'can scarcely be said to have a guru other than the head of his favourite temple, whom he may revere in the most general sense' (ibid., p. 99). Clearly the term 'sect' would be misleading if applied in this situation. Pocock differentiates further:

> Somewhat less diffuse is the situation in which the head of a temple, or some holy man attached to it, attracts congregations of pilgrims on holy days and instructs them in the simplified theology of one of the great Vaishnavite philosophers. Regular members of this congregation count themselves as having received diksha, or initiation from this particular guru and wear a particular kind of necklace, kanthi, made of tulsi, occimum

> sanctum, Holy Basil...
>
> Altogether more formal, and corresponding much more to what sectarian membership connotes in English, is the acceptance of a precise way of life, particular devotional reading, and the authority, even in secular matters, of the head, or his representative, of a particular body having its own temples, rituals and the like, and a sect mark which its members paint on the brow. (pp.99-100)

The latter type most aptly describes the established Vaishnavite sects, Vallabhācārya Sampradāya included. It is significant that Pocock acknowledges the crucial importance of the guru-disciple relationship in Hindu sectarianism when he adds that membership still differs from that of a Church or Non-conformist sect in that there is considerable emphasis upon submission to a guru within the body of the movement.

This interpretation is further substantiated by the ethnographic category of the sampradāya, being the indigenous equivalent of what I have conveniently called the sect, and which applies to the movements associated with the names of Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva, Caitanya, Vallabha, and others. If we recall some Christian connotations of the sect, our general impression is likely to be one of an organised body of believers professing a particular set of beliefs that originated by an act of secession from an established church or larger body, the split being justified in terms of irreconcilable differences in matters of doctrine.[13] The term sampradāya also implies an organised body of persons professing a particular set of beliefs, but there are some additional and very distinctive shades of meaning. The word itself is a compound of the Sanskrit elements dā (give), sam (completely) and pra (excessively), giving the verb sampradā meaning 'To give completely up or to deliver wholly over...to transmit, hand down by tradition, impart, teach', and the noun sampradāya:

> ...a bestower, presenter...tradition, established doctrine transmitted from one teacher to another, traditional belief or usage...any peculiar or sectarian system of religious teaching, sect.[14]

When applied to the Vaishnavite groupings, the sampradāya denotes a vehicle or channel for the continuous transmission of a sacred tradition from one

generation to another. The tradition includes special knowledge revealed by the divine to the founder, scriptures, devotional songs, styles of worship, and so on, while its transmission is effected by an unbroken line of preceptors who serve as a channel for the preservation of the means of salvation and as a living source of inspiration for the interpretation of esoteric points of doctrine, a task which is well within their capacity since they are believed to partake of the spiritual genius of the founder who is himself revered as a divine incarnation (avatāra). Of paramount importance in this uninterrupted line of communication is the sacred formula or mantra which the guru whispers in the ear of the disciple at initiation and which transfers divine grace to the devotee through the intermediary of the guru. Over time, the sampradāya assumes the structure of a 'segmentary lineage' in the sense of a spiritual succession of ascetics and their lay followings (Burghart, 1978:126), or, as in the case of Puṣṭimārga, a spiritual-cum-hereditary dynasty of householder preceptors descended from Vallabha and known as Vallabha-kula, the 'lineage of Vallabha'.

Richard Barz, who has made a study of the early Puṣṭimārgi texts, has distinguished between the English word 'sect' and the Sanskrit 'sampradāya' in terms of external and internal angles of definition:

> The English word "sect" defines an organized body from the outside, as a group formed to distinguish itself from other organized bodies.... The Sanskrit term "sampradāya", on the other hand, defines an organized body from the inside as a group organized for the transmission from generation to generation of a body of doctrines or traditions. (1976:39)

But he does add that the concept has a shade of meaning closer to the idea of the sect as an exclusive and separatist body. This is apparent in the notion of the satsang or 'society of the righteous' which presents the disciples of Vallabhācārya as a close-knit group intensely loyal to their guru and avoiding contacts with the ordinary world, thereby increasing the intensity of their devotion by associating exclusively with like-minded

divine souls. Today also, the term satsang is applied to any formal or casual gathering of Puṣṭimārgis that meets for such purposes as the singing of traditional sectarian religious songs, discussions of religious matters, readings about the lives of Vallabha's eighty-four exemplary disciples, and the occasional public lectures given by visiting gurus. The idea of the satsang evokes an image of the eighty-four exemplary disciples of Vallabhācārya and is essentially a model for emulation.

Although indigenous categories, sampradāya and satsang provide a useful framework within which to begin to describe Puṣṭimārgi social organisation and the meanings that underlie Puṣṭimārgi symbolism. In this respect, I would stress, as Dumont and Pocock have done, the pivotal significance of the institution of guru-ship in the shaping of Hindu sectarianism. But by emphasising the cultural traits of this institution, I do not intend to deny the usefulness of seeking comparisons with sects outside India. It is significant, for example, that the 'inventions' promulgated by the sect-founding sannyāsi approximate to what Weber referred to as the 'breakthrough' achieved by the charismatic leader or prophet (1947, pp. 358f.). Moreover, little work has been carried out on the development of Hindu sects over time and the relevance of Weber's ideas on the 'routinization' of charisma in this process. Now Weber's thesis has had less relevance in the study of modern Christian sects where leadership is diminishing in importance as a vehicle of organised religion. But in India, Weber's ideas come into their own: charisma finds its cultural expression in the satsang and its institutional embodiment in the charismatic succession of gurus, the sampradāya.

The Weberian approach is useful in focusing on the internal dynamics of sects. Sect development is not merely to be seen as an accommodation to the logic of hierarchy and Brahmanism, for sects also experience internal adjustments and tensions involving more basic aspects of the 'world' such as the economic interests of their members. Other than the inaccurate

supposition that sects that initially attempt to shake off caste restrictions inevitably end up by becoming castes themselves,[15] no ideas have been put forward as to the character of what may be called the 'institutionalised' or 'established' sects in India, though they have evolved elaborate systems of worship, complex organisational forms, their own systems of rules and regulations, all of which have carried them far from their pristine experiences. The data put forward in the present study is intended to fill this gap.

Some of the more recent practices and institutions of the Vallabha Sect have received an unusually wide attention, though it is unfortunate that they have been explained in terms of degeneration rather than institutionalisation.

Puṣṭimārga in Published Sources

Before outlining the content and scope of the thesis, I should mention the dominant impression of the Vallabha Sect conveyed by much of the literature. Bryan Wilson has remarked that all too often we are made aware of sects because of some bizarre episode or extraordinary dimension of faith, and that we are frequently stirred by politicians or journalists '...who, for their own purposes, have represented sects as enemies of the people, sinister influences, destroyers of families and decent ways of life.' (1970:241-242). Indeed, those already familiar with the accounts of Puṣṭimārga will have no doubt marked their severely disparaging tone, for the sect has been much maligned for the alleged sensuality of its beliefs and practices. Mackichan, writing in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, typifies this attitude when, along with other scholars, he dubs Puṣṭimārga as the 'way of eating, drinking, and enjoyment' and its votaries as the'Epicureans of India'. The history of the cult, he continues, follows stages very similar to the development of Epicurean morals, a degeneration having its hedonistic roots in the founder's teaching. The gurus of the Vallabha Sect, known as Mahārājas or Gosains, are singled out for special

criticism; they are said to indulge in the most licentious practices which have earned for them a 'shameful notoriety' (1921, pp.580-583). What then was the basis of this notoriety?

Save for the occasional brief reference little was written about the sect in English prior to the publication of H.H. Wilson's Religious Sects of The Hindus in 1861. This author emphasises the blatant worldliness of its practices and the luxurious lifestyles of its preceptors and contrasts them with the deprivations of the Hindu ascetic:

> He (Vallabha) taught that privation formed no part of sanctity, and that it was the duty of the teacher and his disciples to worship their deity, not in nudity and hunger, but in costly apparel and choice food, not in solitude and mortification, but in the pleasures of society, and the enjoyment of the world.... The Gosains are always clothed with the best raiment, and fed with the daintiest viands by their followers, over whom they have unlimited influence...they are not infrequently destitute of all pretensions to individual respectability. (This edition 1976:125 and 136).

Though he does not mention it, Wilson was aware at the time of certain longstanding rumours concerning the conduct of the Mahārājas. These rumours centred on the rite of initiation and the interpretation of the accompanying formula or mantra which candidates desiring admission into the order were obliged to repeat in the presence of a guru Mahārāja. By repeating this sacred mantra (originally communicated to Vallabha by Lord Krishna) the neophyte solemnly dedicates, and promises to dedicate in future, his (or her) mind, body, and worldly possessions, including his house, wife and children, to Lord Krishna before making use of them himself. As an expression of devotion and act of consecration the content of the formula is unexceptional, that is unless linked to the idea that the Mahārājas are incarnations of Lord Krishna and that Krishna is therefore only accessible to his devotees through the person of the Mahārāja. Given a more palpable demonstration of faith, we have the alleged custom of dedicating newly married brides to the Mahārājas for their 'enjoyment' before consummation of their marriages with their husbands.

Whether or not such practices were commonplace is uncertain. What we do know is that in Bombay during the 1850's a dispute arose between some Mahārājas and Gujarātī Brahmans which brought these allegations to the fore. The dispute might easily have been contained within the sect had it not been for its appeal to reformist elements in the press. One young journalist, Karshandas Muljī, a former follower of the Mahārājas and hence, in his own words, 'familiar with all their mysteries and evil practices', founded a weekly newspaper known as Satya Prakāsh (the 'Light of Truth') with the express object of advocating religious, social and educational reforms, particularly, as it appears, among the Sect of the Mahārājas. On October 21, 1860, he published an article entitled 'The Primitive Religion of The Hindus, and the present Heterodox Opinions' in which he described the movement as heretical, accused the Mahārājas of 'shamelessness, subtlety, immodesty, rascality and deceit' and implored them most earnestly to desist from defiling the wives and daughters of their devotees. After some months, Jadunāthjī Mahārāja of Surat responded by filing an action for libel against Muljī. The defendant put in a plea of not guilty adding that the article was true, that there were passages in the religious books of the Mahārājas which inculcated adulterous worship, that the Mahārājas generally committed adultery, and that the plaintiff was no exception.[16]

The case came before the Supreme Court in Bombay on January 26, 1862. Subsequently known as the Mahārāja Libel Case it extended over forty days (twenty-four days before the court) and involved the examination of over sixty witnesses. The trial threw up a detailed catalogue of immoral practices and made much of the 'grotesque veneration' in which devotees held their gurus, allegedly manifested in such acts as eating the leftovers of their meals and drinking the water wrung from their loincloths after bathing. The verdict was not an unqualified victory for Muljī. The judges found in favour of the defendant on the issue of justification of the libel,

while the plaintiff was awarded nominal damages of five rupees! But it was abundantly clear where the judges' sympathies lay. The puisne judge, Sir Joseph Arnould,congratulated the defendant and his witnesses in his summing up for their courage in exposing the corruption of the sect and expressed the hope that they be rewarded by the support of those 'whose homes they have helped to cleanse from loathsome lewdness, and whose souls they have set free from debasing bondage'.[17]

The trial was widely reported in an outraged English and vernacular press. Its effect was to bring to the public forum and to present for public disapproval the beliefs and customs of the sect, whether real or supposed. Indirectly it provided a temporary focus for the contemporary debate on the ethical standards of Hinduism. For British scholars and administrators it provided yet another instance of the fantastic diversity of Hindu religions, of how degraded and anthropomorphic superstitions could exist alongside the high-toned mysticism of the Vedas. And it strengthened the resolve of Hindu middle-class reformers and apologists to sift out the finer elements of their ancestral faith and to throw away the dross.

I cannot help but feel a sense of sympathy for those latter-day Mahārājas and their disciples who are the undeserving incumbents of a reputation that is still invoked against them and the tenets of their faith. As recently as 1976 an article appeared in the Illustrated Weekly of India which, though directed against the character of a particular Mahārāja, also implied that certain highly immoral practices were commonplace in the sect. Judging by its content one suspects that the author was not only reporting recent news but also repeating old allegations published over a century earlier. But it is even more unfortunate that certain misleading stereotypes of the sect have persisted in the scholarly literature. Few authors have studied the sect with any seriousness, while many have made curt references which belie the sect's significance as one of the

most influential popular expressions of sect-organised bhakti in northern India. A.L. Basham, after explaining that the Mahārājas 'are still treated with a devotion rare even in India', mentions the scandals of the last century and then proceeds to dismiss Vallabhācārya as a teacher 'of doubtful value' and to assign him to the ranks of teachers who are 'either downright charlatans or sincere men deluded by spiritual pride' (1977:238). It is sincerely hoped that the present study will help in the dissemination of a more balanced view of this sect.

Outline of Thesis

This thesis is mainly based on social anthropological field research conducted between April 1977 and August 1978 among the Puṣṭimārgis of Ujjain. It focuses in particular on the five sectarian temples situated in the city, four of which are affiliated to the estates of absentee Mahārājas and a fifth that is privately owned by a Brahman family whose members claim to be descendants of one of Vallabha's leading disciples. My choice of the sectarian temple as the location for a study of Puṣṭimārga was originally made in recognition of its ethnographic convenience as a principal centre of cooperative devotional activity as well as its special significance in the eyes of devotees as the abode of Lord Krishna and the locus of a distinctive mode of worship preserved unchanged since the time of Vallabha's second son and successor, Viṭṭhalnāthjī.

Puṣṭimārgis appear to set great store by temple worship. The deity is sedulously and lavishly attended. 'He' is offered choice delicacies, he is splendidly attired according to time of day, season and festival occasion, and his immediate surroundings are richly decorated with scenes of Krishna's līlās as described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Devotees visit the temple during one or more of the eight periods of the day when the doors of the inner sanctum are opened to reveal the enthroned image of the infant or adolescent Krishna. Regular attendance is encouraged on

the grounds that the devotee cannot endure the pain of separation from his (or her) beloved Krishna for longer than one day. Indeed, it would appear that temple worship is the principal means by which these householder initiates demonstrate their faith and participate in the life of the sect. As such, the five Vallabha temples featured here provide the specific institutional setting for a study of Puṣṭimārgi belief, ritual and organisation as perceived and practised by temple-going initiates in Ujjain.

Having delineated the field, I should immediately add the following qualifications. In the first place, I do not intend the study to be exclusively parochial in scope. Though a convenient locus for research, it would be misleading to treat these temples as independent institutions, or their clienteles as autonomous religious communities, while ignoring their connections beyond Ujjain. It will be necessary for us to broaden our frame of reference now and again in order to view the sect as a whole, noting in particular the horizontal cultural and structural ties which draw the temples and devotees of Ujjain into the total domain of the Sampradāya, whose temples and followers are widely dispersed throughout northern and western regions of the country. During fieldwork I made no hesitation in accepting invitations to visit sectarian establishments in neighbouring towns and villages and also further afield at the major centres of sectarian pilgrimage near Mathurā in Braj and at the temple town of Nāthdwāra near Udaipur in Rājasthān.

In the second place, along with the need for breadth is one for historical depth. Given the availability of documentary sources, I see no reason why they should not be used selectively and where relevant. After all, it is only by looking at religious movements in their wide historical and cultural sweep that patterns can be discerned which are of continuing relevance in the present, awareness of which enables the anthropologist to analyse his field data within a wider temporal perspective.

At the same time, however, I have felt it necessary to restrict the historical content. The bulk of such material included here falls within the category of 'traditional history', or the past as informants see it and as it is portrayed in popular texts and stories. In this respect my use of traditional history will be consistent with the idea of the sampradāya as a vehicle for the preservation of a sacred culture.

In the following chapter I begin by giving a general description of the Puṣṭimārgis of Ujjain set against the colourful backdrop of an ancient sacred centre revered by diverse strands of Hindu religiosity: Shaivite, Vaishnavite and Shākta. Ujjain, known to the Classical World as 'Ozene', has long been an important commercial centre dealing mainly in the manufacture and trade of cotton materials. The majority of Puṣṭimārgi initiates living in Ujjain belong to the Gujarātī and Mārwārī merchant castes (Banias) whose forefathers migrated there in the course of their commercial activities. Ujjain is also a famous centre of pilgrimage. According to sectarian tradition, Vallabhācārya visited the place as a pilgrim in 1490 AD and established a 'Seat' or Baiṭhak. The spot is now marked by a temple dedicated to the worship of the founder of the Sampradāya.

In Chapter III I look beyond Ujjain to the over-arching framework of the Sampradāya. I consider the dynastic structure of the sect by focusing on the conceptual status of Vallabhācārya as a divine incarnation (avatāra) and man-divine intermediary and that of his guru-descendants who are thought to partake of his spiritual attributes. In this respect I consider the oft-misunderstood phenomenon of 'guru-worship', which is highly developed in Puṣṭimārga, and I discuss some of its ritual manifestations as observed at the Baiṭhak and on those occasions when living gurus visited Ujjain.

As descendants of Vallabhācārya, the Mahārājas claim the sole right to initiate devotees into the sect. Chapter IV begins with a description of the rite of initiation which confers upon the novice the status of sevak and which entitles him to perform sevā, or 'disinterested service' of Lord

Krishna, in the manner laid down in sectarian tradition. Sevā not only denotes the physical form of Puṣṭimārgi worship, but also the mental attitude of the devotee, the sevak, which is characterised by a spirit of selfless and overwhelming love for Krishna in which the devotee assumes various roles vis-à-vis Krishna, as a servant, playmate, lover and parent. It is on this basis that devotees distinguish between their own worship and that performed in non-sectarian contexts which is known as pūjā. A basic understanding of the conceptual implications of the sectarian devotional idiom and the man-divine relationships that it articulates is an essential preliminary to the more detailed analyses undertaken in all subsequent chapters.

Chapter V introduces the cosmography of the Puṣṭimārgi temple as the abode of Krishna and the celestial stage upon which sevaks play out their respective roles as participants in the divine drama or līlā. It is within the terms of līlā that I interpret the darshan, the central episode of temple life when the deity is revealed to his loving admirers. I also concentrate on the significance of the divine image and the nature of its conceptualization and treatment as an actual living manifestation of the child Krishna. As in the case of guru-worship, image worship is highly developed in the sect to such an extent that it is probably unsurpassed elsewhere. I argue that it is necessary to put aside all Western theological and philosophical preconceptions concerning idol worship and the worship of holy objects in general and to consider the Puṣṭimārgi image not as a 'symbol' or 'representation' or 'aid to the conceptualization' of divinity, but as a depository or 'treasure store' of the selfless loving emotions of the sevak, feelings which are in themselves manifestly divine. The shift is from dualism to monism, or to Pure Non-Dualism (Shuddhādvaita) in the terminology of the sect.

The temple is itself a rich treasure store of medieval tradition, especially in the decorative, musical and culinary arts. Chapter VI

provides a detailed description and analysis of the form and content of daily and seasonal rituals which take the form of scenes representing particular episodes of Krishna's life in Braj. An attempt is made to convey the highly intimate and domestic flavour of devotional services performed in the temple and their personal symbolism. The temple routine appears to be highly dramatic. Devotees participate in an elaborate form of role-playing as they identify themselves with the participants in Krishna's līlā. Indeed, there are significant comparisons to be made with Sanskrit poetic theory which holds that works of art should be created in such a way as to be capable of arousing a particular dominant emotion (bhāva) in the mind of the beholder. Puṣṭimārgi sevā combines a variety of artistic forms in such a way as to inspire the appropriate devotional emotion of selfless love for Krishna in the mind of the sevak so that he (or she) experiences the same emotions as the inhabitants of the celestial Braj. But for the sevak the experience is real rather than dramatic, for he is thereby carried into the heart of līlā.

Chapter VII is reserved for a detailed description and analysis of culinary practices and concepts as they relate to the food offering (bhog) and the consecrated food remains of the deity (prasād). I suggest that an exclusive emphasis on the pure-impure idiom as an interpretative model is likely to lead to a serious misunderstanding of the significance of the food offering, and hence of the nature of the relationship between Krishna and the devotee as expressed through this particular transaction in foods. A preoccupation with rules of purity ultimately works contrary to the spirit of spontaneous loving devotion. In the context of the sect the idiom is relativized and subordinated to ideas which approximate to the sacred and the profane, in which purity is not a quasi-physical condition but a state of mind. The devotee feels 'pure' emotions of love for Krishna. The transaction of foods is a tangible, edible manifestation of the intimate relationship existing between Krishna image and devotee as explained in

Chapter V.

Chapter VIII presents a systematic framework within which to understand the conceptual themes which underlie Puṣṭimārgi temple organisation. To participate in temple worship is to enter a complex web of transactional relationships centering on the deity but also involving many subsidiary transactions between fellow devotees. This system is to be viewed as being organised around and geared to a re-distributive process with the deity occupying the symbolic role of redistributor or 'great provider'. It is interesting to compare the principles that underlie this system of redistribution with those of other traditional systems of redistribution in India.

Ideally, the redistributive system is based on lofty principles of altruism, equality and fair shares for all, and yet devotees are always ready to point out that this is not the case in actual practice because there are always those so-called sevaks who make an outward show of doing sevā while secretly harbouring selfish interests. I describe how some Puṣṭimārgi temples are pervaded by an atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicion expressed chiefly through gossip concerning the misconduct and selfish interests of others. Many of the allegations made in gossip concern the misappropriation of temple properties. Those who hold prominent positions in the redistributive system, such as priests and managers, are more likely to be singled out as the perpetrators of such mischief. In explaining this situation, I explore the complex relationship between the values and interests of Puṣṭimārga and those of the business families who make up the vast proportion of the sect in Ujjain as well as in many towns and cities of northern and western India. By this route I find myself considering one of the major themes of sectarianism in general, viz. the specific link between sects and urban merchant classes.

A concluding chapter draws together the principal findings of the study and explains their relevance for an understanding of wider social and cultural aspects of Hindu sectarianism.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Braj is the area around the city of Mathurā in the modern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh where Krishna is supposed to have spent his infancy and youth.

2. Thomas J. Hopkins explains that the Bhāgavata Purāṇa marks an almost complete break with traditional Vedic ceremonies and carries a clear social message, the gist of which '...is to refute the idea of a person's birth, social status, or caste membership is of any significance with respect to salvation by means of devotion' (1966:13). He concludes that the Purāṇa was probably written by ascetics outside the established socio-religious system who drew support from classes normally despised by orthodox society (ibid., p.22).

3. Hence Dumont describes bhakti as a 'revolutionary doctrine since it transcends both caste and renunciation'. The manner in which this synthesis is achieved is evident in the three disciplines of salvation expounded in the Gītā: through acts (karma), corresponding to life in the world; through knowledge (jñāna), corresponding to renunciation; and through devotion (bhakti), which modifies the others: 'The central point is that thanks to love, renunciation is transcended by being internalized; in order to escape the determinism of actions, inactivity is no longer necessary, detachment and disinterestedness are sufficient: one can leave the world from within' (Dumont, 1980:282).

4. The term Vaishnavite (Vaiṣṇava) normally denotes a devotee, or class of devotee, who regards Vishnu in one or another of his incarnations as the Supreme Lord and hence principal or sole object of worship, being understood in contradistinction to Shaivite (Shaiva), a devotee of Lord Shiva. The terms do not denote specific sects in the sense that we shall come to understand the Hindu religious grouping. Rather, they are generic: there are some sects which revere Shiva and others which revere Vishnu. There are also Vaishnavites and Shaivites who have no formal connections with sect-organised religion.

5. See Troeltsch (1931). Weber and Troeltsch both characterised 'church' and 'sect' as two opposed ideal types. Whereas the church was hierarchical and conservative, the sect was egalitarian and radical; whereas membership of the church was ascribed at birth, allegiance to the sect was voluntary with acceptance based on proof of some claim to personal merit; whereas

the church was associated with the ruling classes and instrumental as a means of social control, the sect was supported 'from below' by the lower social strata.

6. See in particular Becker (1932) and Yinger (1957).

7. Niebuhr (1929). His argument supports Weber's (and John Wesley's) contention that godliness is conducive to economic success.

8. A typical example is as follows: "A sect is a type of religious group formed in protest against, and usually separating from, another religious group; its formation represents support of beliefs, ritual practices, and moral standards, most commonly believed by sect members to be a return to earlier and purer forms of the particular religion; the membership is limited and earned by individual performance; the sect therefore stands apart from, and in contrast to, groups which are carriers of the dominant norms of the societal system; and the sect moves in time either to a position of limited isolation from the surrounding system, or to a state of adaptation to it' (A Dictionary of the Social Sciences, Gould and Kolb, 1964).

9. Wilson avoids the church-sect dichotomy on the grounds that the church is no longer the central Christian entity. Instead he enumerates a series of attributes that are true of sects in different cultural contexts and epochs under the headings voluntariness, exclusivity, merit, self-identification, elite status, expulsion, conscience and legitimation. He then formulates a sevenfold classification of sect types on the basis of their different institutionalized responses to the world: conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist, manipulationist, thaumaturgical, reformist and utopian (1970, pp.26-47).

10. The distinction was used by C.K. Yang in his analysis of religion in classical Chinese society (1961, chapter XII) and derived from Joachim Wach's distinction between 'religious organizations' and those religious groupings which are identical with 'natural groups' (Wach, 1948).

11. In his own research Stein concentrates on the relation between sect recruitment and upward social mobility in medieval south India, noting how low-caste but politically and economically powerful Shudras managed to attain high managerial and ritual positions within the temple institutions of the Rāmānuja Sect, enjoying a ritual rank commensurate with their increased secular standing in other aspects of south Indian life (Stein, 1968).

12. See 'World Renunciation in Indian Religions', first published in Contributions to Indian Sociology, iv, 1960. References here are to the article as it appears in Appendix B, Homo Hierarchicus, Complete Revised Edition, 1980, pp. 267-286. The essay is further substantiated in Chapter 9 of the same book, pp. 184-191.

13. It is significant that in explaining the meaning of the word 'sect' the Latin root sequi ('to follow') is sometimes confused with the Latin secare ('to cut'). The word sect is derived from the former.

14. M. Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Oxford, 1899:1175.

15. See, for example, Srinivas (1952:31) and Pocock (1973:151). Although there are sectarian castes, many sects show no signs of becoming castes or of containing a separate system of castes within themselves.

16. A history of the sect which also includes specimens of evidence and the judgement from the trial was published as The History of The Sect of Mahārājas (anonymous, though known to have been written by Karshandas Muljī) in 1865 (see Muljī, 1865).

17. See ibid., p. 132.

CHAPTER II

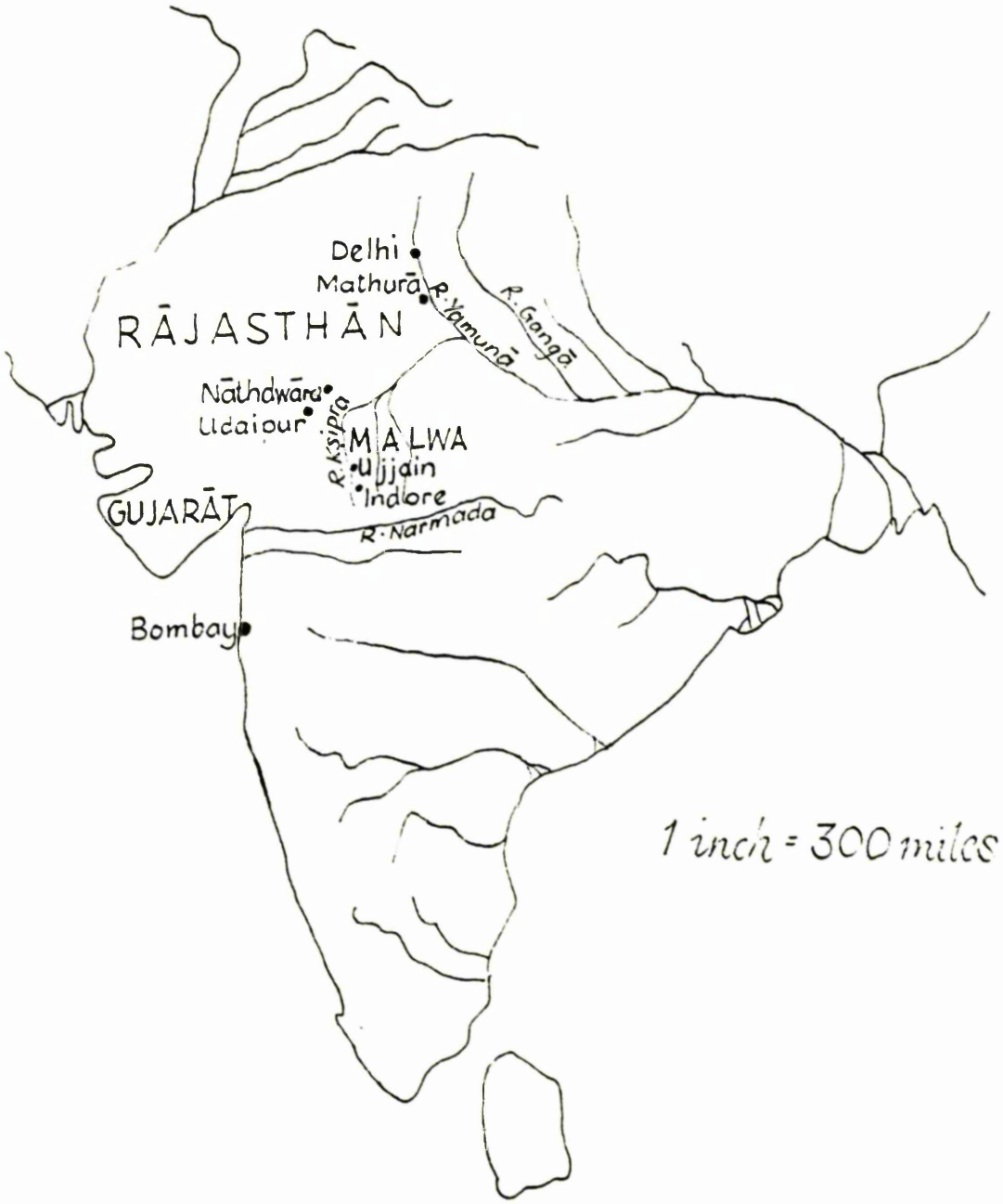
THE PUṢṬIMĀRGIS OF UJJAIN

The following account is set against the broad backdrop of an administrative, commercial and religious centre of wide renown and remote antiquity.

Ujjain is a city of nearly two hundred thousand inhabitants lying in the heart of Malwa in the western part of Madhya Pradesh (see Map 1 and footnote 1). Geographically, Malwa forms a distinct region that consists of a vast lava plateau rising gently from a height of about 1,500 feet in the north to 2,500 feet in the south where the Vindhya Hills fall steeply down to the valley of the river Narmada. The northern scarplands are broken by the river Chambal and its right bank tributary, the Shipra, the sacred stream that flows through Ujjain.

This basalt tableland has a typical morphology of rolling downs and the occasional flat-topped hill. In many areas it has been reduced by weathering to form a fertile, water-retaining, black soil which has proved ideally suitable for the cultivation of cash crops such as opium and cotton, the latter having been a principal source of Ujjain's wealth as a trading and manufacturing centre since ancient times. For purposes of home consumption millets predominate (mainly sorghum), along with wheat, maize, gram, betel leaf, ground nuts, melons and mangos.

Malwa is well-known for its pleasant and salubrious climate. Moderate temperatures, as against the scorching excesses of the plains, and the proverbially cool Summer nights, owe much to the plateau's high elevation. The Summers (April-June) are hot and dry with temperatures ranging between 90 and 110 degrees Fahrenheit. During the Rains (July-September), the Vindhyas channel the south-west monsoon into the region ensuring an average



1. UJJAIN - SITUATION

supply of 25 to 35 inches of rainfall. In Winter (November-February), nights can be chilly. All the same, the people of Malwa enjoy the many blessings bestowed by fertile soils and a favourable climate:

> It is a common saying that Malwa has such a good climate and soil that people never leave it, but on the contrary outsiders from all quarters try to settle there.(Mayer, 1960: 13)

Geographers and historians have been quick to point out the considerable influence of natural features in shaping Malwa's history (Sinh, 1936; Day, 1965; Spate, 1967, pp.621-7). Spate writes of a 'curious duality':

> The Deccan lavas provide the only really extensive agricultural base in Central India, and so it has retained its individuality, yet, as a land of passage, it has constantly changed hands. (1967:624)

There is more to this duality. Its abundant natural wealth, its ideal location at the confluence of principal trade routes, its strategic military importance as a base for striking at Rājputana and the Deccan (Sinh, 1936:10), its easy accessibility to greedy neighbours (Day, 1965, pp. 2-3), all these have meant that Malwa has attracted, and been forced to assimilate, people of diverse origins. And yet in spite of all, Malwa has remained a distinct cultural region: its people share a common sense of identity, a language known as Malwī (normally classified as a dialect of Rājasthānī), and a colourful history preserved in popular folk songs, stories and anecdotes. As the principal cultural and often-time political capital of Malwa, Ujjain has served as the centre-stage of the region's history.

Ujjain: A Brief History

Still known by its ancient names of Ujjayinī and Avantikā, Ujjain is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in South Asia. Five-and-a-half centuries before Christ, when Buddha preached his first sermon in the Deer Park at Sārnāth, it was already an established commercial centre standing at a junction of three major trade routes. It was the most important stopping place on the Dakṣiṇāpatha (the Southern Road) which linked the northern city of Rājagriha, capital of Magadha, with the Deccan

countries in the south. Another route connected Ujjain and the western seaport of Bharukaccha (modern Broach), and from there to the Mediterranean. The Alexandrine geographer Ptolemy (c. 2nd century AD) knew of Ujjain as 'Ozene', some of his information being derived from the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, a seaman's guide written in Greek a century earlier, which mentions that onyx stones, porcelain, fine muslins, and large quantities of cotton piece goods were exported from 'Ozene' via the port of 'Barygaza'.[2]

At the time of the Buddha, Ujjain was the capital of Avanti, whose ruler, Chanda Pradyota, was one of the most powerful monarchs in northern India, along with the rulers of the principalities of Magadha, Kosala and Vatsa. Buddhist tradition asserts that a native of Ujjain, Mahākachchāyana, converted King Pradyota to the faith and with him many of his subjects (Law, 1944:32). The Jains also have a special regard for the city: Mahāvīra did penance there (Stevenson, 1915:33). Mid-way through the third century BC, the city was annexed by the Mauryas and served for a time as the viceregal capital of the future Emperor Ashoka. Following the dissolution of the Maurya Empire, a branch of the Shakas, foreign invaders from Central Asia, occupied parts of Avanti and established Ujjain as a capital of the Western Satrap (c. 1st century AD).

In Brahmanical tradition the Shakas are hated barbarians. The expulsion of the Shakas and restoration of Brahmanism is attributed to Malwa's greatest hero, King Vikramāditya, whose court was adorned by the Nine Gems or geniuses, among them the brilliant poet Kālidāsa who immortalised the city in the lines of his Megadhūta (The Cloud Messenger). Vikramāditya remains a half-legendary figure and there are difficulties in determining his dates or true identity with any degree of certainty. He is supposed to have inaugurated the Vikram Samvat Era, which commenced in 57 BC. But if he did live around this time, then his victory over the Shakas was but a temporary interlude, for inscriptions reveal that the Shakas ruled from Ujjain up until the end of the fourth century AD.

Others have preferred to identify Vikramāditya with Chandra Cupta II of Magadha who trounced the Shakas around 400 AD and who assumed the title 'Vikramāditya' on his coins. Despite the mysteries surrounding the historic figure, the legendary hero, the wise, benevolent, brave and righteous monarch, the zealous patron of learning and the arts, who freed his people from the tyranny of the foreign invader, still forms the subject of an extensive and very popular collection of folk tales. It is significant that during the Bimillenial celebrations of the Vikram Samvat Era in 1943, Vikramāditya was adopted as the embodiment of a new spirit of independence, a focus of national hopes and aspirations.[3]

Another royal hero of Malwa traditionally extolled as a rightful successor to Vikramāditya was the Paramāra king Bhoja Rājā who ruled during the first half of the eleventh century AD. It is said that Bhoja rediscovered Vikramāditya's throne that had lain buried for centuries. It was a magnificent specimen adorned with gold and silver tracery and carvings of thirty-two celestial nymphs. But each time Bhoja attempted to sit upon the throne one of the nymphs dissuaded him from doing so by relating a story of the glorious reign of Vikramāditya. After hearing thirty-two such eulogies, Bhoja became convinced of his own unworthiness to mount the throne and gave orders for it to be reburied.[4]

King Bhoja transferred his capital from Ujjain to Dhar and the importance of the former diminished save as a place of pilgrimage. In 1235, Iltutmish, the Slave Sultan of Delhi, sacked Ujjain and destroyed the famous temple of Mahākāl, taking the Shiva linga with him to Delhi. Nearly seventy-five years later Malwa was annexed to the Delhi Sultanate by one of Alā-ud-dīn Khiljī's generals. During the years which followed the Sultans settled many of their own supporters in the towns of Malwa, a move which was later to prove disastrous for the Sultanate for 'it created a class of Muslim officers who began to look upon the territories as their prized possessions and wanted to retain them at any cost' (Day, 1965: 6). Sultan Firuz Shah

appointed one Dilawar Khān Ghuri as a Governor of Malwa and it was he who cautiously declared independence while Delhi was reeling in the aftermath of Timur's invasion in 1398. Malwa, the provincial Sultanate, experienced an easy intermingling of Islamic and Hindu traditions which received its most magnificent expression in the palaces and pavilions of Mandu near Dhar. Continual wars were fought against the Sultanate of Gujarāt and the Hindu principalities in Rājputana, until in 1531, Mahmud II of Malwa was defeated by Bahadur Shah of Gujarāt and his capital at Mandu fell to the Gujarātī armies.

Ujjain assumed political importance once more after 1562; the Mughal Emperor Akbar conquered Malwa and made it the chief town. It would appear that the whole province prospered under the Mughals. European traders who had settled on the west coast travelled by the Malwa routes (Sinh, 1936: 4). With them came Nicolao Manucci, the Venetian adventurer, who passed the Rains of 1680 at Ujjain with Shah Alam, Aurangzeb's eldest son. He wrote of the strategic importance of the city where resides a principal general with a garrison of ten thousand horse. He describes it as an important place of pilgrimage, once containing many lofty temples but now in ruins, being long since overthrown (see Irvine, 1907-1908, Vol. II, p.430 and Vol. III, pp.147-9).

In 1699 the Marathas raided Malwa and plundered some villages in the south. During the years which followed they progressively exposed the weaknesses of the Mughal Empire and finally proved to be a major force in its destruction. The province was formally ceded to the Marathas in 1741 when Bājī Rāo Peshwa became the deputy governor. Some years earlier the Peshwa had given the district of Maheshwar and nine villages around Indore to Holkar. In order to temper Holkar's ambitions, he nominated Ranojī Sindhia to work jointly with him. Sindhia later made Ujjain his capital and was responsible for the rebuilding of many temples there, including the temple of Mahākāl destroyed by Iltutmish five centuries earlier. The city began to prosper considerably as a commercial centre. Small

wonder that after defeating a division of Sindhia's army at Ujjain in 1799, Jaswant Rao Holkar decided not to plunder the town but 'reserved it from his troops to exact a heavy contribution himself from its wealthy inhabitants, who were fined in proportion to their real or supposed wealth' (Malcolm, 1824, Vol. I, p.215).

In 1818, the Mahārājas of the Holkar and Sindhia dynasties made treaties with the British and thereafter retained their titles under the aegis of the British until Independence. After 1818, the transference of Sindhia's capital from Ujjain to Gwalior (250 miles to the north-east) and the rapid rise of the nearby city of Indore, both contributed towards the depopulation and commercial decline of the city which were not arrested until the opening of the railways in the 1880's.[5]

Sir John Malcolm, who knew the region first-hand from 1818 to 1822, refers to Ujjain's 'illustrious history' and considered it the capital of the province on the grounds of its 'superior magnitude' (1824, Vol. I,p.45). p.22). Fortunately, he has left a useful description of the business communities of the city, among them some twelve hundred families belonging to a Shiite sect of Muslims known as Bohras, originally from the sea-coast of Gujarāt, who were settled in four wards of the city and who engaged in 'every species of commerce' (ibid., Vol. II, pp.111f.). Today, the Bohras are still a prominent mercantile community living in separate wards immediately to the north of the city centre. Of the Hindu and Jain merchants, Malcolm writes that almost all of the bankers and money-lenders (Sowars and Shroffs) and a great proportion of the Banias, or retail traders, are either from Gujarāt or from Mārwār (about 300 miles to the north-west in Rājasthān). Generally, they are not very old settlers, the principal bankers having migrated there 'about three centuries ago'. They are 'either of the Jain or Vishnu faith, but by far the greater numbers are of the former' (ibid., Vol. II, p.160). Of the Banias, more are from Mārwār than Gujarāt, the former being mainly connected with the state of Jodhpur.

These settlers kept up communications with their homeland and returned to pass the remainder of their days there, selling shares in their businesses to younger countrymen (ibid., vol. II, pp.162-3).

The Mārwārī Banias were the principal controllers of the manufacture and export of opium, and Ujjain was an important entrepôt port in their trade. The Government saw fit to scrutinise the quantity and quality of opium leaving the province by setting up scales there. It was packed in sealed containers and transported to Bombay en route to China. During the 1870's this trade reached a peak, but by the turn of the century it had begun to decline as the demand from China decreased (see Luard, 1908, pp.61-77).

The production and manufacture of cotton has a much longer and continuing history. It has been a major factor contributing to the expansion of the city during the present century and its entry into the industrial age with the opening of several large cotton mills and ginning factories. The availability of raw cotton and of workers having an indigenous manufacturing expertise have facilitated the growth of this industry. Cotton goods have been produced in Ujjain continuously since before the fact was recorded by the anonymous author of the Periplus; what has now changed is the method of production and also the means of transport: no longer by pack-animal to Broach, but by rail to Bombay and the cities of the north.

Today, Ujjain is well served by road and rail communications. A branch line of the Central Railway links the city to Bhopal the state capital of Madhya Pradesh. It is also a junction on the Western Railway between Ratlam and Indore. In addition, there are regular 'bus services to Indore (35 miles south), where there is an airport, and to Dewas, which is situated on the Bombay-Agra trunk road. Such modern transport facilities have greatly improved its accessibility as a centre of pilgrimage, particularly for those coming from outside Malwa.

Ujjayinī: The Sacred Centre

This is not meant to be a comprehensive account of the numerous sacred spots in Ujjain. The Skanda Purāna devotes a long section to the task, adding that it is necessary to spend a whole year making a tour of the region.[6] There are, for example, eighty-four thousand Shiva lingas, of which eighty-four are enumerated and described individually in the text. I shall therefore restrict myself to a brief introduction to some of the more important shrines and festivals. My acquaintances in Ujjain were generally familiar with a variety of anecdotes concerning the origins and histories of particular shrines. More often than not the same anecdotes are to be found in the Puranic texts.

Not only does the city occupy a central position in a geographical sense, standing as it does at a junction of ancient trade routes, but also in a cosmographical sense. Ujjain is considered to be the spiritual centre of India. The nature and significance of sacred geographies in Hindu ritual contexts is potentially a rich field of study. Beck, for example, has explored evidence of conceptual correspondences between the body, temple, city and cosmos in rituals performed by Tamil-speaking Hindus in south India, noting the idea that in certain rituals the body and the cosmos are thought actually to merge, or else to come as close as possible to a merger, depending on the absoluteness of the 'monist' position (Beck, 1976:214).

This is not the place to pursue the subject in depth, though I should point out some of the more popular and important beliefs regarding the position of Ujjain in a universal context.

A Sanskrit couplet lists Avantikā as one of the Seven Sacred Cities of the Hindus, along with Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Māyā (Hardwār), Kāshī (Vārāṇasī), Kānchī and Dvārakā (see Quanungo, 1972:26). All these cities are said to have the capacity to grant liberation (moksa) to those who worship at their shrines and who bathe in their sacred waters. In normal years Ujjain

attracts fewer pilgrims than most of its sacred counterparts, but its popularity rises dramatically once every twelve years when it becomes the auspicious venue for India's greatest religious festival, the Kumbha Melā.[7] The festival was last held there in the month of Vaishākh (April-May) in 1980, although, during my stay in Ujjain in 1977-8, preparations were already well under way: planning committees had been set up, new roads were being laid and several temples were receiving a facelift. The convergence of more than a million pilgrims on the city presents government officials with many importunate problems, not least the provision of extra food, accommodation, transport, medical facilities and policing. All the same, the festival brings commercial benefits to the city.

Here, the Kumbha Melā is known more specifically as the 'Simhastha Melā' because it is held at the auspicious time when Bṛhaspati (Jupiter) enters Simhastha (the sign of Leo). The origin of the festival is as follows:

> When the gods and demons churned the ocean, Dhanvantari, the physician of the gods, emerged with a pot (kumbha) containing the nectar of immortality (amṛta). A struggle ensued as the gods and demons tried to gain possession of the invigorating substance. Indra's son, Jayanta, managed to bear it away but the others followed him. As the pot was snatched back and forth, some drops of nectar fell to the earth at Allāhābād, Hardwār, Nāsik and Ujjain. These places have therefore become very holy and anyone who bathes in their waters at the time of the appropriate planetary configuration will surely achieve mokṣa.

The Kumbha Melā, which is held alternately at Allāhābād, Hardwār, Nāsik and Ujjain, effectively draws the city into a wider cosmological context, as do some of its shrines. The temple of Harsiddhi Devi, containing an icon of the goddess in the form of a Shrī Yantra,[8] is revered by Shāktas and Tāntrikas as a pīṭhasthāna, one of the places where a part of Satī's body fell while being dismembered by Lord Shiva. The elbow fell at Ujjain. It is said that the goddess is constantly present in such places and those who worship her there gain great powers of magical illusion (see a version of this myth in O'Flaherty, 1975:249f.).

It is also sometimes stated that Shiva takes the form of a linga to remain with each part of Satī's body (ibid., p.250). Just to the east of Harsiddhi Mandir stands Ujjain's largest and most famous temple dedicated to Lord Shiva as Mahākāl, The Great Black One and the Lord of Time. The linga stands in a small subterranean chamber situated beneath the main central shikhara. This is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, or pre-eminent lingas, revered by Hindus, the rest being installed in temples throughout India (see the appropriate passage from the Skanda Purāṇa in Quanungo, 1972:24).

The Jyotirlinga of Mahākāl and the city of Ujjain are credited with a special significance on account of their cosmic centricity: Ujjain is designated variously as the centre of India, of the world, and of the universe. Through the city, and dissecting the Jyotirlinga, runs the first meridian of longitude as calculated by ancient Hindu astrologers. Hence, in more recent times the place has been called the 'Greenwich of India'. This line continues northwards until after some two miles it passes through another Shiva linga installed in the temple of Maṅgalnāth, revered as the birthplace of the planet Maṅgalā (Mars). It is generally supposed that an observatory existed in Ujjain in ancient times. In 1733, Mahārāja Jai Singh, the then Governor of Malwa under the Mughals, built an observatory to the south of the city just like the ones he had built at Delhi, Mathurā, Vārāṇasī and Jaipur. The Yantra Mahal at Ujjain is still utilised by local astrologers; government officials provide them with daily readings.

Ujjain's centricity has also been described in terms of the subtle body as conceived by Yogīs and Tāntrikas. In the Vāmana Purāṇa it is known as 'Nābhidesh', while in Yogic texts it is called 'Maṇipūrcakra' (Quanungo, 1972:262). The former can be roughly translated as the 'Centre of the World' (nābhi = 'the hub of a wheel' or 'the navel'; desh = 'country' or 'part of the body'), the latter is the wheel (cakra) of the subtle body located near the navel. In order to grasp the full significance of this

correlation it would be necessary to refer to an appropriate treatise on Tāntrik thought.[9] Briefly, the Tāntrik Yogī, sitting in an upright position, locates himself at the centre of the universe and conceives of the countries, planets and constellations as revolving around him. He identifies his own spinal column (susumnā) as the world's axis along which are located six or seven energy centres or cakras. The cakra at the base of the spine near the perineum contains a sleeping serpent - the goddess Kuṇḍalinī - coiled around an inner lingam. The Tāntrika's aim is to awaken Kuṇḍalinī, who then pierces and enters the mouth of the lingam and ascends through the various cakras, including the cakra at the navel (a crucial stage in the success or failure of the Tāntrik), until she pierces the cakra in the top of the skull. There she unites with the male seed such that the Tāntrik experiences a complete identification of the self and the cosmos at the genesis of creation. Viewed in this way, Ujjain is identified with the cakra at the navel and the Jyotirlinga with the spinal column. On a horizontal plane the Jyotirlinga is located at the hub of the universe, while vertically, it is a kind of axis mundi connecting earth and heaven and hence two different states of being.

The sacred city is therefore identified with the whole universe as well as being the centre of the universe. It can also be identified with intermediate spaces. The Indian subcontinent (Bhāratvarṣa) is conceived as one vast kṣetra, a 'field' of pilgrimage where the pilgrim's sins are destroyed. It contains numerous tīrthas, the word for a sacred shrine as an object of pilgrimage. In the same way, Ujjain is a kṣetra containing many tīrthas. The Skanda Purāṇa extols Ujjain as the supreme tīrtha being surrounded by the four principal doors (dvāra) of Dvārakā in the west, Badarīkedāra in the north, Purī in the east and Rāmeshvaram in the south, the four guardian deities being Shrī Krishna, Kedāreshvar, Jagannāth, and Rāmeshvar respectively (Pusalker, 1948:471). For Hindus, the greatest pilgrimage is that which involves a circumambulation of the subcontinent

taking in these four shrines while always keeping the kṣetra, the principal object of reverence (i.e. Bhāratvarṣa), on one's right side. I was told by several persons in Ujjain that the pilgrim attempting such a circumambulation (parikramā) must be sure to terminate his pilgrimage in the centre by worshipping the Jyotirlinga of Mahākāl in Ujjain, otherwise he will not gain the highest spiritual reward of mokṣa.

There is also a local parikramā of Ujjain, the Pāñc Koshī Yātrā, which occurs annually and lasts for five days during the month of Vaishākh. The journey involves the performance of worship (pūjā) at four Shiva temples situated at four cardinal points determined with reference to the city: Pingaleshvar in the east, Kāyāvarohaṇeshvar in the south, Bilveshvar in the west, Durdareshvar in the north, and terminating on the fifth day with the worship of Mahākāl in the centre. By circumscribing an area and then settling at the centre, the pilgrim thereby identifies himself with a sacred space of cosmic proportions. The body as the 'field' in which the fruits of action are reaped is identified with Ujjain as the 'field' of pilgrimage which confers the greatest fruit of release from samsāra.[10]

In a cosmographical sense, then, the layout is one of a series of concentric forms all grouped around the same cosmic centre and all existing in a relationship of perfect structural correspondence. Conceptually, Ujjain contains within its own boundaries the whole universe. The Skanda Purāṇa assigns it a pre-eminent status on the grounds that it contains a smashāna, ukhara, kṣetra, pīṭha, and vana, a combination which exists nowhere else.[11] The Purāṇa also enumerates eight Bhairavas, eleven Rudras, twelve Ādityas, six Vināyakas, twenty-four Mātris, ten Vishnus, four Mārutis, seven sacred ponds and fourteen sacred tanks, all of which have been 'identified' by local priestly pilgrim guides (Quanungo, 1972, pp.35-8). The temple of Mahākāl is also of cosmic dimensions. It is said that the temple tank, Koti Tīrtha, was filled by the Garuda bird with drops of water taken from every sacred tank in the universe such that it now contains the

virtuous qualities of every one. The individual who enters the holy city, who performs pūjā of Mahākāl according to the rules prescribed in the Purāṇas, who bathes in the river Shipra, thereby manages to align himself with the cosmos and ideally achieves salvation, conceived as a state of perfect mutual identification between the body, the soul and the universe.

I should add here that the Puranic descriptions of Ujjain, faithfully remembered from one generation to the next by paṇḍits, temple priests, pilgrims and interested residents, and given concrete embodiment in the many tīrthas, serve to impose upon the place a semblance of completeness and harmonious integration, at least in the eyes of those who perceive its true celestial form and function. In the previous section I explained that Ujjain remains culturally distinct yet cosmopolitan. Here I would suggest that in a cosmographical sense it is distinct insofar as it contains the whole universe within its bounds.

Merit (puṇya) and release (mokṣa) are not easily come by. A pilgrimage is thought to be something more than the mere performance of appropriate rituals; it is also a journey of the soul that demands intense mental concentration and a genuine attitude of devotion if it is to be efficacious. Motives vary: for some they are general, such as a wish to acquire merit (puṇya), to expiate one's sins (pāp), and to achieve salvation (mokṣa); for others they are more specific such as the desire for release from a particular physical affliction or the expiation of ritual impurity. Villagers come from all over Malwa to the river ghāṭs for the performance of certain life-cycle rituals, such as the tonsure of the young male child and the piṇḍadān ceremony organised in the name of a recently departed father (Mayer, 1960:235f.; Mathur, 1964:183). As in other major pilgrimage centres, a class of Brahman priests specialises in the guidance and supervision of pilgrims. These paṇḍits know the precise locations of the numerous tīrthas dispersed throughout the city and are fully acquainted

with the correct ritual procedures associated with each one. In Ujjain, most paṇḍits involved in this work belong to Gujar Gaur and Audīchā Brahman jātis.

Thus far, it would appear that Ujjain owes its sacred reputation almost entirely to the worship of Lord Shiva as Mahākāl. The deity is popularly referred to as the king of Ujjain. I was told, though I cannot vouch for the truth of the statement, that when Mahārājas of the Sindhia family used to visit the city, they dared not remain within its boundaries overnight lest Mahākāl took the action as an affront to his sovereignty; instead they used to put up at the Kāliyādah Palace some three miles to the north. Yet although Mahākāl is the undisputed king and principal object of devotion, it is also true to say that many of his subjects, while paying him token homage, prefer to worship one or another of Vishnu's incarnations. The place has long been revered as a kṣetra by Vaiṣṇavas as well as Shaivas, the former looking upon the Shipra river and Ankpāt (just to the north of the city) as tīrthas of special sanctity. After the temple of Mahākāl, the largest and most popularly attended temple is one dedicated to the worship of the cowherd Krishna, known as Gopāl Mandir, situated in the commercial heart of the city.

Overall, Ujjain contains a complex mosaic of sects, cults and temples dedicated to a wide variety of gods and goddesses. About one hundred and fifty years ago a British Cavalry officer, Lieutenant Edward Conolly, was confronted by a similar situation and seemed somewhat surprised to find that

> The Hindus of Oujein do not seem to be much troubled with sectarianism; though Mahadeo (Shiva) is of course the most popular divinity, the worshippers of other gods are not molested, nor are the objects of their worship neglected. (1837:835).

What must have appeared a strange and erratic pattern of temple attendance in Conolly's eyes was evidently explained by his Brahman informant:

> We treat our deities as you English gentlemen do your friends in a cantonment. We call on them all round but are more intimate with some than with others. (Ibid., p.835).

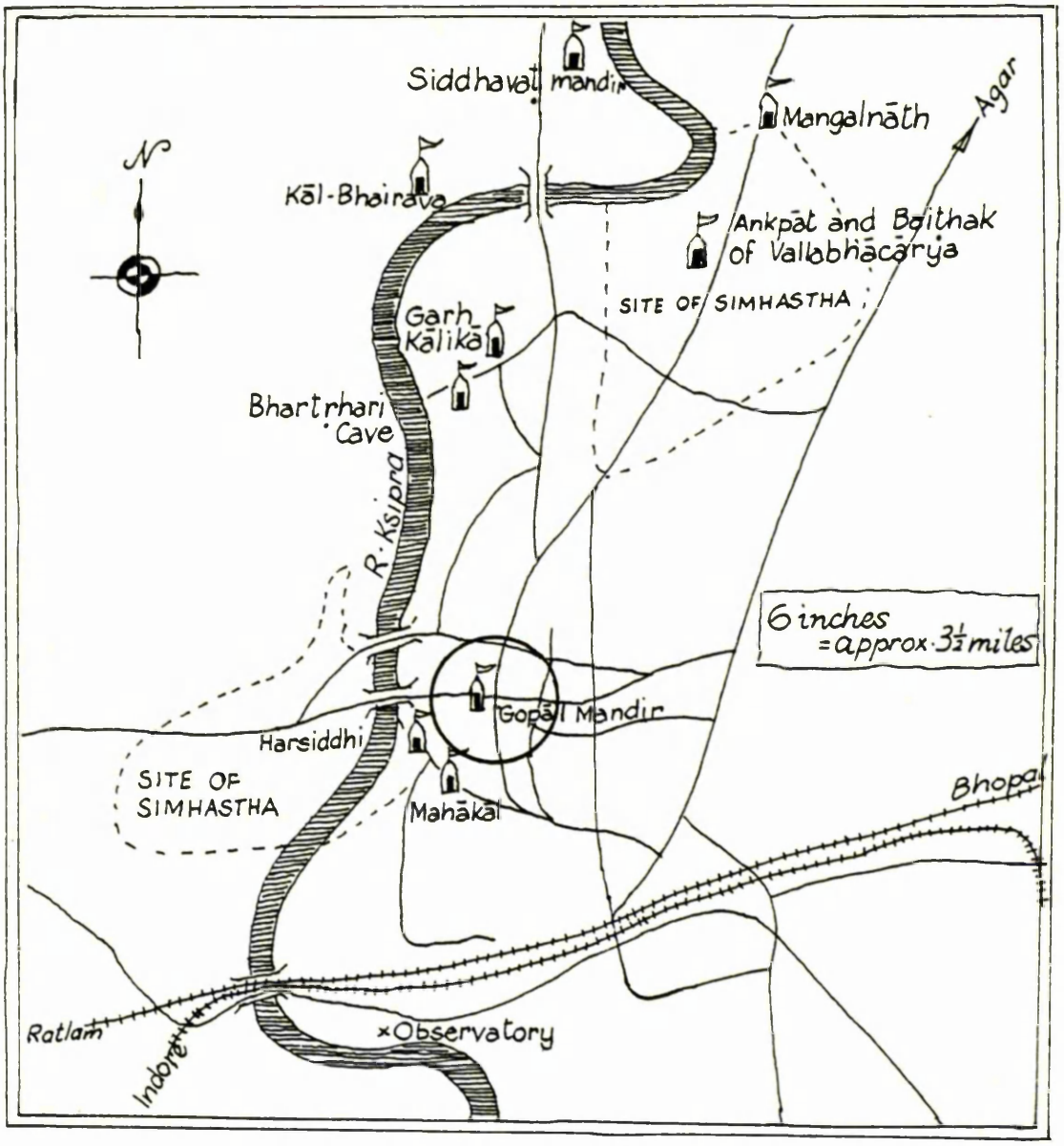
Conolly's apparent surprise on witnessing a relatively peaceful state of co-existence among the worshippers of an extensive pantheon of divinities probably stemmed from his experiences of sectarianism back home where there existed a variety of Nonconformist persuasions, each having exclusive congregations and attending separate establishments for purposes of worship. Needless to say, in India in general, and in Ujjain in particular, different temples do not necessarily represent different sects, nor for that matter is there anything like an absolute correspondence between temple attendance and sectarian affiliation. Admittedly, there are some specialised sect-affiliated temples; this study is concerned with five such establishments. But most temples in Ujjain have no specific sampradāyik connections, including Mahākāl Mandir, Gopāl Mandir and Harsiddhi Mandir, three of the largest religious establishments in the city. Although these three are associated with Shaivism (Mahākāl), Vaishnavism (Gopāl Mandir) and Shāktaism (Harsiddhi) in a general sense, they do not have clienteles drawn exclusively from one or another of these general tendencies. For example, a worshipper may attend Gopāl Mandir regularly and regard himself as a Vaiṣṇava, even though he visits Mahākāl and Harsiddhi on several occasions each year. In this respect, it is significant that Harsiddhi Devī is revered by Vaiṣṇavas as well as Shaivas and Shāktas, for when Shiva danced erotically with Satī's corpse it was actually Vishnu who cut away her limbs, thereby causing her elbow to fall at Ujjain. In all, patterns of temple attendance are influenced by numerous variables. Because different deities tend to specialise in different forms of supernatural action, exercising different kinds and degrees of supernatural power, they are approached for a variety of reasons in which family custom, illness and misfortune, worldly and material ambition, and individual preference all play their part.

The majority of devotees who attend the Vallabha temples in Ujjain are initiates of the Sampradāya. But there are also many non-sectaries

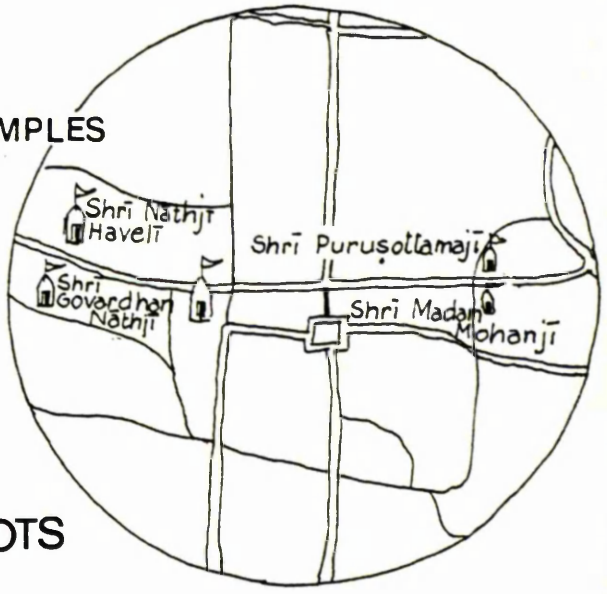
who occasionally come to observe the deity, especially on festivals such as Holī, Phūlmaṇḍalī, Janmāṣṭamī and Annakūṭ,[12] attracted by the luxurious decorative and culinary displays for which the Vallabha temples are famous. Generally, casual visitors are not discouraged.

It is also the case that most Puṣṭimārgis who regularly attend sect-affiliated temples also visit other temples on occasions. Sectarian texts exhort the initiate to seek the protection and refuge (āshraya) of Shrī Krishna alone and of no other gods (anyāshraya). If this is to be taken to mean that the devotee should avoid the worship of other gods, then the rule is often repeated but rarely observed. A very few Puṣṭimārgis assured me that they never entered non-sectarian (maryādā) temples. Most, however, have regular recourse to Lord Krishna yet visit other deities on occasions; or as Conolly's informant might have put it - they are more intimate with the child Krishna than with other divinities.

Specific and generic sectarian distinctions tend to crystalise at the time of the Simhastha Festival. In the past some inter-sectarian rivalries have ended in large-scale fighting, though differences are more usually expressed in competitive debates (in which one's own side is always reported to have won), or else by mutual avoidance. The Vaishnavite sampradāyas and the Shaivite sampradāyas are kept separate. They have their traditional camping grounds in different areas of the city: the Shaivas on the left bank of the Shipra opposite Mahākāl Mandir (by the Akhāḍā of Guru Datta) and the Vaiṣṇavas on the right bank of the Shipra further north at Ankpāt (see Map 2). Each camping ground is further subdivided into areas corresponding to the different sampradāyas. Puṣṭimārgis refer to their own site as 'Vallabhanagar' or the 'City of Vallabha'. Incidentally, at a recent Simhastha Melā the Vaishnavite and Shaivite sects could not agree in appointing the most auspicious time for the festival with the result that the Vaiṣṇavas convened in May 1968 and the Shaivas in the May of the following year.



INSET SHOWING VALLABHA TEMPLES



2 · UJJAINĪ · SACRED SPOTS

Some of the established Vaishnavite sampradāyas have followers and institutions in Ujjain. There is a small Nimbārka temple near Kṣīrsagar and nearby is a temple of the Praṇāmī Sampradāya.[13] A temple of the Rāmānuja Sect stands behind Harsiddhi Mandir near Rām Ghaṭ on the river. But easily the most populous Vaishnavite sampradāya in Ujjain is that of Vallabhācārya.

Puṣṭimārga in Ujjain

Just to the north of Ujjain situated in open countryside not far from the banks of the Shipra, there is a shrine known as Sāndīpani Āshram, the Hermitage of Sāndīpani. A legend reveals that Lord Krishna, his elder brother Balrām , and their friend Sudāmā came here to complete their education in the Sixty-Four Arts and Fourteen Branches of Knowledge as disciples of Sāndīpani. The Āshram is now marked by a temple-like structure containing an image of the great sage. The area around is known as Ankpāt because it is here that Krishna and his companions used to wash the figures (ank) from their slates (pāṭī) in a nearby pond known as Vishnusagar. There is also a large tank nearby, Gomptī Kuṇḍ, said to have been a gift from Krishna to his guru. Sāndīpani had made a solemn vow to bathe in the Gomptī river every day.[14] So in order to save his guru much time and inconvenience, Krishna excavated a tank adjacent to the Hermitage and filled it with the waters of the Gomptī.

Ankpāt's reputation as an important Vaishnavite shrine is further enhanced by the presence of a second shrine called 'Mahāprabhujī kī Baiṭhak', being the seventy-third of a total of eighty-four 'Seats' or Baiṭhaks which mark the various spots where Vallabhācārya (Mahāprabhujī - 'Revered Great Lord') halted during the course of his all-India peregrinations. At each stopping-place he is supposed to have read aloud the complete text of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa in seven days. The Baiṭhak at Ujjain is associated with a miraculous episode:

> When Mahāprabhujī came to Avantikā it was very hot and there was no spot shaded from the mid-day sun. As he was performing sandhya (a daily ritual performed by Brahmans using vessels filled with water), a pipala leaf came gliding through the air and landed at his feet. Taking up the leaf, he planted its stem in the muddy earth and watered it from his sandhya pot. Immediately (or overnight in other versions), the leaf grew into a huge pipala tree and afforded much shade.

The ageing pipala that now stands over Vallabha's throne is regarded as the very same tree. The throne, the tree and an image of Sāndīpani are all enclosed within a walled compound and maintained by the Temple Board of Shrī Nāthjī Temple at Nāthdwāra, the Baiṭhak being part of Shrī Nāthjī's extensive estates. Local Puṣṭimārgis have a special regard for the place since Vallabhācārya is thought to be constantly present by his throne. It also attracts pilgrims, including the very few who travel the length and breadth of India following in the founder's footsteps. For the majority who are unable to make such a pilgrimage, however, there is a large room containing eighty-four large models made of white marble and representing every Baiṭhak in India.

For local Puṣṭimārgis, the real significance of the seventy-third Baiṭhak is to be found within the wider context of Vallabhācārya's life and mission.

Vallabha was born in 1479 AD of Tailanga (Telugu) Brahman parents who were natives of the village of Kānkarvād on the Godāvari river in south India. But his childhood was spent far to the north in the holy city of Vārāṇasī where his father engaged the best Brahman tutors to provide him with a thorough grounding in the scriptures. The boy showed remarkable intellectual ability: by the age of ten he had completely mastered the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Shāstras and Purāṇas. Of these, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa was his favourite, especially the tenth book which deals with the youthful exploits of Krishna. Having completed his orthodox education, he left Vārāṇasī with his parents on a journey to the south. This marked the commencement of the first of three great all-India pilgrimages which he was to undertake during the course of his lifetime. Wherever he went,

large crowds would gather to see him and to listen to his recitations of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. He also participated in many philosophical debates with holy men of diverse religious traditions and sampradāyas, among them the followers of the ninth century preceptor Shankarācārya whose teachings he invariably criticised for their inconsistencies. These scholars, the majority of whom concentrated on the worship of Lord Shiva, were his chief opponents.

I cannot do full justice here to the subtle, and often brilliantly articulated, dialectical arguments attributed to Shankarācārya.[15] In the literature of Vallabha Sampradāya his theology is dubbed 'Māyāvād' (Māyā-ism) on the grounds that it is based on the supposedly false assumption that māyā, illusion, is a force which exists independently of the Supreme Lord (Brahman) with the implication that the physical world (jagat) is unreal, being a figment of māyā. Salvation, in Shankara's scheme, is to be achieved through the acquisition of knowledge which leads to the realisation that the world is unreal and that the individual soul (jīva) and the Supreme Lord (Brahman) are really one and the same entity. For this reason Shankara's theology is normally described as Non-Dualistic (Advaita). Vallabha is also a Non-Dualist in that he believes the jīvas and Brahman to be one and the same, as sparks to fire, but he cannot accept the existence of a force - māyā - that is independent of Brahman. Hence for Vallabha the physical world is real and subtly Brahman. Souls that are miserable are not deceived by an unreal world but by their own ignorance. Furthermore, salvation is not to be sought through the acquisition of knowledge (and hence reliance on self-effort), but through the receipt of divine grace (puṣṭi,anugraha) accompanied by loving devotion (bhakti). Nor is salvation conceived in terms of a complete merger between the soul and the Supreme, rather a total union is put off indefinitely so that the Supreme Lord and the divine souls can experience the indescribable bliss of desiring union.

One such debate between Vallabha and the Māyāvādins was held at the temple of Jagannāth in Purī. Another was organised by King Krishnadevarāya

at Vijayanagar in south India which resulted in a famous victory for Vallabha as a result of which he was given the title ācārya, meaning 'great preceptor' (see Chapter III, p.108). It is because of these presumed successes in defeating by argument the followers of other philosophical traditions in all quarters of the subcontinent during the course of his circumambulations that Vallabhācārya has been hailed by his followers as a digvijay in or 'World Conqueror'. The underlying rationale is like that of the pilgrim described earlier, who, on completing a circuit of the subcontinent taking in the four major sacred shrines at all four corners, effectively locates his own soul within its universal context.

The pilgrimages are fully documented in a Sampradāyik text written in Braj Bhāṣā and entitled Caurāsī Baiṭhaka Caritra (CBC), the 'Stories of Eighty-Four Baiṭhaks'.[16] The work is one of the more recent of the sectarian prose texts in Braj Bhāṣā probably dating from the early years of the nineteenth century, though many of the anecdotes must have been in circulation for years before this. Significantly, the work mentions the establishment of Baiṭhaks at all four 'doors' (dvāras) of the subcontinent, viz. Purī in the east (no. Thirty-Four), Rāmeshvar in the south (Forty-One), Dvārakā in the west (Sixty), and Badrināth and Kedarnāth in the Himalayas (Seventy-Seven and Seventy-Eight).

But on contemplating the four 'doors' from the point of view of Puṣṭimārgi cosmology, the centre moves from Ujjain to Govardhan Hill in Braj from whose holy peak the uplifted arm of the principal sectarian deity of Shrī Nāthjī emerged sixteen days before Nāg-Pañcamī day and sixty-nine years before the birth of Vallabha in 1409 AD. Another sectarian text written in Braj-Bhāṣā, the Shrī Nāthjī Kī Prakaṭya Vārtā (SNPV), or the 'Account of the Manifestation of Shrī Nāthjī', opens with ten Sanskrit couplets from the Girirāja-Khaṇḍa of the Garga-Saṁhitā which reveal precisely the same rationale for the universal pilgrimage described earlier,

only in this case the tour of Bhāratvarṣa, which takes in the deities of Jagannāth, Ranganāth (in place of the Shaivite shrine at Rameshvaram), Dvārakānāth and Badrināth, is entirely fruitless if the pilgrim fails to terminate his journey with the worship of Shrī Nāthjī on Govardhan Hill in Braj. Moreover,

> But if he only visits Srī Nātha
> Devadaman on the Govardhana Mountain,
> He obtains the fruit of the pilgrimage to all
> the four Nāthas in this world
> (from SNPV, p.2, trans. by Vaudeville, 1980: 19).

Today, the circumambulation of Braj, known as Ban-Yātrā, and of the sacred Govardhan Hill, known as Govardhan-Parikramā, both performed during the months of the Rainy Season, are the principal Puṣṭimārgi pilgrimages. Like the Jyotirlinga of Mahākāl which stands in a subterranean chamber immediately beneath a towering shikhara or 'mountain peak', the Shrī Nāthjī deity that stands in a cave beneath Mount Govardhan and that lifted the mountain aloft to protect the people of Braj from a storm sent by Indra, is also a kind of axis mundi:

> the hero's feet stand firmly on the underground and his whole standing body with the uplifted arm appears as a kind of 'pòle' connecting the three worlds.[17]

The Puṣṭimārgis of Ujjain are therefore in a position to locate themselves within two cosmic contexts: the first is that of Ujjayinī as a principal centre of pilgrimage, and the second relegates Ujjain to the status of a stopping-place on a pilgrimage which ultimately leads to Braj, the heart of Puṣṭimārgi Vaishnavism. Though the present study specifically concerns Puṣṭimārga in Ujjain, its traditions are part and parcel of the celestial culture of Braj.

But Ujjain would not have been without significance as a resting place for Vallabhācārya. In view of the city's renown as a holy tīrtha fully authenticated by the Purāṇas, it is highly probable that Vallabha visited the place during the course of his travels. As a major centre of Shaiva worship boasting numerous scholars adhering to the doctrines of

Shankarācārya, it is quite possible that he regarded it as providing a tempting challenge in his plans to abolish the Māyāvād and to establish his own version of the Bhaktimārga, known as Brāhmavād and subsequently as Puṣṭimārga. At least this was the scenario as given to me by Puṣṭimārgis in Ujjain, not forgetting of course the dramatic meeting between Vallabhācārya and Mahākāl, the Lord of Ujjain.

The story, which is to be found in the CBC (pp. 171-77) reveals that while Vallabhācārya was reading the Bhāgavata Purāna, Mahākāl used to come and listen. But his worshippers, all Māyāvādin paṇḍits, were afraid to confront Vallabha in an argument because they knew that the ācārya would defeat them. Instead, they fled from the city and hid in the surrounding villages. After completing his recitation, Vallabha asked Mahākāl to recall the paṇḍits to Ujjain. Mahākāl was pleased to oblige and appeared to his devotees in their dreams and ordered them to return. They dutifully obeyed their master and came en masse to debate with Vallabhācārya. Even though they fired many different questions at him all at the same time, the ācārya managed to answer each and every one of them individually and simultaneously by speaking in many voices such that they became fully convinced of the superiority of the Bhaktimārga and begged him to accept them as his disciples. They discarded their necklaces of rudrakṣa beads (normally worn by Shaivas), bathed in the Gomptī Kuṇḍ, and received the initiatory mantra and tulasi necklaces (normally worn by Vaiṣṇavas) from their new preceptor. Lord Mahākāl was delighted and invited Vallabha into the city, where many more divine souls sought his refuge.

Ujjain is mentioned several times in the earlier literature of the Sampradāya. The Caurāsī Vaiṣṇavan Kī Vārtā (CVV) includes an account of Padmā Rāval, a Sanchorā Brahman, who was taunted mercilessly by his castemates for his backwardness, until, by the grace of Vallabhācārya, he acquired a thorough knowledge of all the Vedas, Purāṇas and Shāstras.[18] His son Kṛṣṇabhaṭṭa, was a leading disciple of Vallabhācārya's own son,

Viṭṭhalnāthjī. In the Do Sau Bāvan Vaiṣṇavan Kī Vārtā (DBVV), he is praised for his selfless generosity. It is written that many Vaiṣṇava pilgrims used to stay at his home on their way from Gujarāt and the south to the Puṣṭimārgi settlement in Gokul near Mathurā in Braj. While they slept Kṛṣṇabhaṭṭa would fill their bags with prasād of milk-sweets so that they would not feel hungry on their journey (ibid., p.38). A prominent sectarian scholar, Dr. Hariharnāth Ṭaṇḍan, has argued that Kṛṣṇabhaṭṭa was probably the first person to write prose accounts of the early disciples in Braj Bhāṣā. He also suggests that Kṛṣṇabhaṭṭa lived between 1529 and 1586 AD (Ṭaṇḍan, 1961:125). Today, the descendants of Padmā Rāval and Kṛṣṇabhaṭṭa still live in Ujjain where they perform devotional worship in a private but well attended Puṣṭimārgi temple.

Although it is almost certain that the history of Puṣṭimārga in Ujjain goes back to the sixteenth century, it is also the case that a large proportion of its latter-day adherents are descendants of merchants who migrated there from the towns and cities of Gujarāt and Rājasthān. Most of the Gujarātī and Mārwārī Banias of the Vishnu faith observed by Malcolm in the early nineteenth century (see above, p. 45) were most probably Puṣṭimārgis.

The relationship between the urban business castes and Puṣṭimārga has always been a symbiotic one. Puṣṭimārga teaches that the acquisition of wealth and property merely in conformity with one's duty as ascribed by birth is essentially a selfish and profane (laukika) endeavour. But to acquire wealth with the intention of dedicating all of one's efforts and gains to the service of Lord Krishna means that both the activity of acquiring wealth and wealth itself are rendered sacred by a process of consecration. The selfish pursuit of profit becomes a selfless form of inner-worldly renunciation, quite compatible with the householder lifestyle of the businessman, for he is not expected to forsake his worldly pursuits and acquisitions as the renouncer must, rather he dedicates them to Lord Krishna before making use of them himself. This form of dedication

receives palpable expression in endowments to temple deities. It also sanctions the making of money as a sacred (alaukika) pursuit, provided that motives are unselfish. To be wealthy is a sign of Krishna's grace. The words of a Gujarātī merchant on a pilgrimage to the Baiṭhak at Ujjain are an unequivocal affirmation of this:

> I have no education; I cannot read or write; but by the grace of Bhagavān I can sign cheques, so I am now running a business worth lakhs of rupees.

Viṭṭhalnāthjī toured Gujarāt six times between 1543 and 1581 with the intention of raising money to fund the particularly extravagant programme of devotional worship that he had introduced in his temple on Govardhan Hill in Braj. He is said to have been highly successful in making converts among members of the business castes, especially in Ahmedabad, Cambay and Godhra (Telivala, 1928). Over the years, Gujarātī merchants have made large endowments for the establishment and upkeep of Puṣṭimārgi temples in their home towns and cities, often inviting guru-descendants of Vallabhācārya to settle there also. As these merchants migrated (permanently or temporarily) to the cities and towns of Malwa in the course of their trading activities, they carried their faith with them and provided the means for the establishment of temples wherever they settled. A similar pattern can be seen during the early nineteenth century in Bombay (see Muljī, 1865, pp. 145-6). In Ujjain, as in many of the towns and cities of central India, many of these settlers were involved in the buying and selling of merchandise, especially cotton cloths, as are their present-day descendants.

Puṣṭimārgis and their Temples

I should make it clear from the outset that the Puṣṭimārgis in Ujjain do not constitute an integrated, close-knit, neighbourhood community of the kind more usually delineated in social anthropological monographs. Rather, they are thinly dispersed through several wards of the city with a comparatively greater concentration in and around the commercial centre.

Admittedly, a devotee may count a proportion of fellow devotees among his castemates, kin, neighbours and friends, but there are many others with whom his extra-sectarian contacts are minimal or even altogether absent. I was present on several occasions when two initiates, both living in Ujjain, met as complete strangers. What makes the Puṣṭimārgis a community is their common faith and status demonstrated and achieved by their having undergone a formal ceremony of initiation marking entry into the Sampradāya.

I should also point out that I am unable to give a precise estimation of the local sectarian population. Official Government Censuses do not identify the various Hindu sects as distinct religious groupings, nor, as far as I know, does the sect keep up-to-date records of its members. I had neither the time nor the resources to sift out every Puṣṭimārgi living in the city. This was not a serious problem since my primary interest was in those Puṣṭimārgis who were regular temple-goers. Incidentally, several informants (including temple managers and priests) gave the nicely rounded sum of five hundred families or five thousand individuals. I see no reason why their estimation should not be considered to be a fair approximation.

I have already explained my reasons for preferring the sect-affiliated temple as a locus of study. The four temples in Ujjain, along with the Baiṭhak, are particularly well attended. Unlike many Hindu temples which attract a steady stream of worshippers throughout the day, Puṣṭimārgi temples are open only seven or eight times a day when the deity grants public audience (darshan) for periods of between fifteen and thirty minutes. This gives the worship a congregational appearance. At the largest and most popularly attended temple the first audience of the morning (Maṅgalā) and the last of the evening (Shayan) attract between eighty and a hundred worshippers. But attendance doubles twice a month at Ekādashī (the eleventh days of the Light and Dark halves of the Hindu lunar months) and rises even higher at the numerous special festivals held throughout the year

when as many as five hundred men, women and children crowd into the temple. At such times the darshan periods are extended so that all may catch a glimpse of the deity.

The four temples are situated near and around the city centre in close proximity to one another (see Map 2). Generally speaking, devotees tend to visit those temples situated nearest to their homes. However, the fact that all four are within easy walking distance (no longer than a ten minute stroll between the temples furthest apart) means that devotees have the opportunity to pick and choose according to personal preference. It is also common for devotees to attend more than one temple at each outing. Darshan periods are staggered to allow for this practice, especially during festivals when the decoration of the deity in all temples is considered to be a sight not to be missed. I noticed that some of the more enthusiastic worshippers used to visit all four temples daily. Two elderly gentlemen also used to include the Baiṭhak in their tours. It should be clear from these patterns of attendance that the temples do not have the equivalent of discrete 'parishes' and 'congregations' as do Christian churches or chapels.

The four temples are by all appearances quite unimpressive structures, hardly noticeable from the street. The visitor enters into a spacious courtyard at one end of which is a large pair of doors. These doors are opened now and again to reveal the enthroned deity in the inner sanctum. Several rooms are situated off the courtyard including an office where donations are received. There are several other chambers, among them the private apartments and kitchens of the deity which all but the priests are prohibited from entering. Of the four temples, one is privately owned, while the remaining three and the Baiṭhak are attached to sub-lineages or Houses of the Vallabha Dynasty and hence are part of the estates of absentee Mahārājas. They are as follows:

Temple A Shrī Mahāprabhujī Kī Baiṭhak

The Seventy-Third Seat of Vallabhācārya is affiliated to the First Gaddī, the principal shrine of which is the temple of Shrī Nāthjī at Nāthdwāra. It is situated in peaceful surroundings by the sacred tank known as Gomptī Kund some one-and-a-half miles to the north of the city centre on the road to the temple of Mars (Maṅgalnāth).

The 'history' of the Baiṭhak has already been outlined above. At one time it was probably little more than a sacred platform (cabūtarā) at the base of the pipala tree that had appeared in such miraculous circumstances. But in 1978 an impressive new temple was completed which contains sufficient seating and kitchen space to provide a grand feast for several hundred Vaiṣṇavas. The focal point of the temple, situated behind the doors of the inner sanctum, is a low platform suitably adorned with drapery and representing the 'seat' of the guru. Behind another pair of doors just to the right (from the observer's viewpoint) there is another sanctum built around the lower trunk of the sacred pipala tree.

The temple is administered by a Board of Trustees, the President being the chief Mahārāja of the sect based at Nāthdwāra. Since all but two of its members live outside Ujjain, responsibility for the day-to-day running of the Baiṭhak is delegated to a Managing Committee of seven local notables. A priest is engaged on a full-time basis to perform the daily ritual services of the first guru of the Sampradāya.

Temple B Shrī Madan Mohanjī Kī Havelī

The temple is affiliated to a sublineage of the First Gaddī, the chief Mahārāja now residing at Jatīpurā in Braj. It stands off Rāmjī Kī Galī, a narrow passage running between Gopāl Mandir Road and Mirjāvādī Mārg, in Choṭā Sarāfā, a commercial district (sarāfā) situated to the east of Gopāl Mandir. The present structure, which probably dates from the early years of the last century, is badly in need of repair.

The deity is a figure of polished black stone about two feet in height

and depicting the flute-playing Krishna (Muralīdhara) in the characteristic 'thrice-bent' (tribhanga) posture.[19] Shrī Madan Mohanjī is specially revered as a nidhi-svarūp, which, in this particular case, means that 'he' was originally consecrated by Viṭṭhalnāthjī. The priest estimates the date of consecration at samvat 1590 (1533 AD).

The deity has an interesting history, though precise details of names and dates are uncertain since oral accounts tend to differ. One of the better known versions tells how a Muslim lady of Agra named Tāj became an accomplished disciple of Viṭṭhalnāthjī and received the blessings of her guru in the form of her very own Ṭhākurjī.[20] Tāj had a daughter who was also a divine soul: she and Madan Mohanjī used to play children's games together. As the daughter matured, she began to feel for Ṭhākurjī as a lover. When she was married to a Muslim boy in Ujjain, she took her deity with her. Fortunately, her husband was disposed to tolerate the deity's presence and built a temple for him in the grounds of his palace. Some years after the death of Tāj's daughter, the deity and his temple abode somehow came into the hands of the forefathers of one Viṭṭhalnāthjī, the latter being a Puṣṭimārgi and a resident of Ujjain. In 1857, Viṭṭhalnāthjī dedicated the deity and the temple to the Mahārājas of the Gaddī of Mathureshjī based at Kotā, under whose jurisdiction the worship still continues.[21]

In December 1964, the All-India Society of Puṣṭimārgi Vaiṣṇavas (Akhil-Bhāratīya Puṣṭimārgiya Vaiṣṇava Pariṣad) opened a private temple school for infants called Vallabha Bāl Mandir. During 1977, a total of ninety-four pupils between 4 and 8 years were entered in the register (56 boys and 38 girls), supervised by a staff comprising one headmaster (male) and five teachers (female). The school is not restricted to Puṣṭimārgi children, nor for that matter is it restricted to Hindus.[22]

Like the Baiṭhak, the temple is managed by a Trust Board of eleven members with the Mahārāja as President. Only one member lives in Ujjain.

A Managing Committee of five local devotees controls the day-to-day running of the temple. Since managers are volunteers having their own occupations, they delegate some of their work to an accountant (munīm) and a general servant. There is only one priest, but he is aided in his ritual duties by his wife, son and daughter.

Temple C Shrī Nāthji Kī Havelī

The temple is attached to a sublineage of the Second Gaddī, the chief Mahārāja residing at Indore. It stands in Dhābā Road which runs westwards from Gopāl Mandir down to the river Shipra. It is a solid new structure, having been entirely rebuilt about twenty years ago.

The deity is the same in form as its famous namesake at Nāthdwāra near Udaipur, being a black stone figure of Lord Krishna depicted in the act of lifting Mount Govardhan (Govardhanadhara), a reference to the occasion when Krishna sheltered the people of Braj from a great hail-and-thunder storm sent by the jealous god Indra.

Oral testimonies suggest that the deity is of relatively recent origin, probably less than two hundred years. It is said that about the time of the reign of Daulat Rao Sindhia (1794-1823), there lived in Ujjain an extremely wealthy Audīchā Brahman couple who used to travel regularly to Nāthdwāra to visit Shrī Nāthjī, whom they regarded as their very own son. Shrī Nāthjī was so moved by their love that he promised to come to Ujjain to live with them in their house. Some time later as Mādhavjī Murārjī (the husband) was excavating a well, he discovered an image (svarūp) of Shrī Nāthjī (or a black stone which he subsequently had fashioned into an image), which was an exact duplicate of the Nāthdwāra image.[23]

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Shrī Nāthjī remained the domestic deity of a family of Audīchā Brahmans who ran their household as a private temple, allowing Puṣṭimārgi neighbours to attend daily. At some stage the temple was moved from Kārtik Cauk to its present Dhābā road site. About fifty years ago, both deity and temple were dedicated

to the Mahārāja at Indore who delegated the responsibility for the supervision of the temple to a Managing Committee. During the past decade this work has been entrusted to a single manager (adhikārī). Nowadays, Shrī Nathjī Kī Havelī is by far the wealthiest and most popularly attended of the Vallabha temples in Ujjain. Ritual functionaries include a chief priest (mukhiyā), two assistant priests (bhītariyās), and a water-bearer (jal-ghariyā).

Temple D Shrī Puruṣottamajī Kī Havelī

Like Shrī Nāthjī, the temple of Puruṣottamajī is affiliated to the sub-lineage of the Second Gaddī based at Indore. It is situated in a narrow lane just off Mirjāvādī Mārg, less than 200 yards due north of Temple B.

This deity is of polished black stone having four arms (Caturbhuja). It depicts Lord Krishna as Puruṣottama.[24]

The temple was formerly the property of a group of Puṣṭimārgi families belonging to a clan of the Khandelwāl Mahājan caste. In the 1940's the temple was dedicated to the Mahārāja Gaddī at Indore. Today, the deity's ritual services are performed by a single priest, while temple administration is in the hands of the manager of Temple C. Puruṣottamajī Havelī is not as well attended as the other Vallabha temples in Ujjain.

Temple E Shrī Govardhan Nāthjī Kī Havelī

Of the Vallabha temples in Ujjain, this one is exceptional in having no formal connections with the Seven Houses of the Sampradāya. It is situated in an old area of the city known as Kārtik Cauk lying between Gopāl Mandir and the river.

The deity is also in the form of the famous Shrī Nāthjī Govardhanadhara (as in Temple C). It is regarded as a nidhi-svarūp, having been originally consecrated by Viṭṭhalnāthjī and passed on to his disciple, Kṛṣṇabhaṭṭa, who has been mentioned in the previous section. It has remained with the descendants of Kṛṣṇabhaṭṭa to this day.

Members of the Sanchorā Brahman family who now serve the deity also perform the services of the Ṭhākurjī of Vallabha's disciple, Padmā Rāval (CVV, pp.171f.). This deity is an eight-armed image of Krishna (Aṣṭabhujājī). The temple is well supported by members of the Puṣṭimārgi community.

Finally, I should provide a general outline of the character and composition of Puṣṭimārga in Ujjain. In the mid-nineteenth century, Muljī summarised the distribution and composition of the sect:

> The worshippers of this sect are also widely diffused throughout Bombay, Cutch, Kattywar, and central India, and especially the province of Malwa. In all these places they are numerous and opulent, comprising the most wealthy merchants and bankers, and consisting chiefly of bhattias, banias and lowanas. (1865:44)

Now, as in the past, Puṣṭimārga in Ujjain is mainly supported by those castes whose members are traditionally engaged in business activities, as is the case in most towns and cities of central and western India where the sect has a hold. These include an aggregate of castes known by the terms 'Bania' or 'Mahājan', whose members tend to be engaged as retail shop-keepers, brokers, money lenders, and merchants, dealing mainly in cotton cloths, grains, general provisions, gold and silver, and cooking pots. They are mostly organised in family businesses having retail outlets situated in the commercial centre around Gopāl Mandir and in the markets radiating eastwards along Baḍā Sarāfā (specialising in cloth goods) and southwards along Patnī Bāzār (specialising in cooking pots and jewellery). Many Puṣṭimārgi Banias are settled in Kārtik Cauk, a ward lying to the west of Gopāl Mandir. This densely populated neighbourhood is a veritable labyrinth of dark narrow streets and gulleys lined by tall irregular houses constructed with timber frames filled in with bricks, much the same as described by Hamilton in 1820 (Hamilton, 1971:739). Some of the houses still have the ornately carved wooden balconies for which Ujjain was once famous (Luard, 1908:75), though they are not now being replaced. The area is also occupied by Audīchā and Gujar Gaur Brahmans, many of whom work as paṇḍits and pilgrim guides.

The Banias in Ujjain are distinguished according to the area of origin of their forefathers: there are Gujarātī Banias and Mārwārī Banias (from Rājasthān). Among the Puṣṭimārgi Gujarātī Banias, Nagars, Nīmās and Disawāls predominate. It is significant that many still speak Gujarātī amongst themselves, even though the prevailing language in Ujjain is Hindī shading into Malwī. The Mārwārī Banias include Khandelwāls, Agarwāls and Maheshvarīs. Khandelwāls and Agarwāls are further distinguished according to sectarian affiliation: some are Jains and others are Vaiṣṇavas; many of the latter belong to Vallabhācārya Sampradāya. Generally, members of the same caste but of different sectarian affiliations do not marry, though there are some rare exceptions.

There are several families of Bhattias originating from in and around the cities of Rājkot and Jamnagar in Gujarāt who are Puṣṭimārgis. Like the Banias they are engaged in mercantile pursuits. There are also Sonīs (goldsmiths), most of whom live and work in the Patnī Bāzār quarter. All temple priests are Brahmans (Audīchās and Sanchorās). In addition, there are Brahman devotees whose families have been connected with the sect in a lay capacity over several generations.

Castes associated with the Rājput and Shudra categories are hardly represented. I counted one Rājput individual, two Darzīs (tailors), one Sutār (carpenter) and one Mālī (gardener). The reasons given for this varied, though many devotees pointed out that Rājputs and Shudras would not be prepared to give up non-vegetarian foods and to adopt the strict dietary rules necessary for entry into the sect. Even so, there are seven Kayastha families (writer caste) who have embraced the sect and who are strict vegetarians, quite unlike their non-sectarian, non-vegetarian castemates.

Overall, two general categories stand out: first, the Banias and Bhattias who constitute approximately eighty per cent of temple-going Puṣṭimārgis in Ujjain; and second, the Brahmans, among them the temple priests. Both categories are of significance in the construction of morally-

loaded stereotypes.

In this chapter I have considered Puṣṭimārga in a local setting. I now move on to make a more detailed study of the over-arching structure of the Sampradāya, which extends over much of northern and western India.

Notes to Chapter II

1. Ujjain is situated at 23 degrees 11 minutes north latitude and 75 degrees 47 minutes east longitude. It stands at an approximate height of 1,600 feet above sea level.

2. The reference is from Section 48 of the Periplus. The text has been translated into English by Schoff (1912).

3. These sentiments are openly expressed in the Editorial Introduction to a special volume commemorating the Bimillenium of the Vikram Era, published by the Scindia Oriental Institute. The same volume contains several articles on Vikramāditya, the Nine Gems, and dating problems (see bibliography).

4. The stories about Vikramāditya's throne are to be found in several Sanskrit recensions. Texts and translations are included in the Harvard Oriental Series, vols. 26 and 27, 'Vikramāditya's Adventures'. Not far from the temple of Harsiddhi Devi in Ujjain, there is a shrine containing a large model of Vikramāditya's throne and the thirty-two celestial nymphs.

5. Hamilton's description of the city written in 1820 suggests that Ujjain was well on the wane: 'The present city of Ujjain is of an oblong form, and surrounded by a stone wall with round towers. Within this space there is some waste ground, but the inhabited part occupies the greatest portion, and was formerly much crowded with buildings and population; but the number of the latter has been gradually diminishing; and recently many have been attracted to the adjacent city of Indore, where Holcar has at length fixed his hitherto migratory court' (Hamilton, 1971:739). Conolly, who visited the city in the 1830's,estimated the population at about 70,000 (1837:857). By 1881 the population had decreased to about 33,000, a figure which was not to rise significantly until the 1920's. Since 1971, the Censuses have recorded the total population of the Municipal Corporation of Ujjain (71.33 square kilometres), whereas previously they referred to the Municipality (17.33 square kilometres). We should therefore bear in mind the difference in ground area when considering the 1971 Census total of 203,000 inhabitants.

6. I refer in particular to the Avanti-Khanda section of the Skanda-Purāna. Quanungo (1972, Chapter I) has given a detailed summary in Hindī of

this and other relevant Purāṇas and has included the original passages in Sanskrit. For this reason I shall refer to her book when mentioning Puranic material. Pusalker (1948, pp.463-82) has written a useful essay in English on 'Ujjayinī in the Purāṇas' with some original Sanskrit passages included in footnotes.

7. See Bhardwaj (1973). This author visited Ujjain at the time of the Kumbha Melā in 1968. Although Ujjain normally attracts most of its pilgrims from the Malwa area, it should be considered a sacred centre of supra-regional status on the basis of the Melā (p.130).

8. The Shrī Yantra is a diagram consisting of nine inter-penetrating triangles arranged around a central dot which represents the seed which generates the yoni or vulva. The diagram is particularly significant in Tāntrik meditation: to gaze upon this Yantra is to see into the mouth of creation in a continuous process of unfolding itself.

9. See, for example, Avalon (1929).

10. See Bhagavad Gītā, Chapter XIII, for an example of the use of the word kṣetra (lit. 'field' and hence 'field of pilgrimage') to denote the body as a 'field' where the fruits of action are reaped.

11. See Quanungo (1972:27) and Pusalker (1948:469). Briefly, a kṣetra is a 'field' of pilgrimage; a pīṭha refers to Ujjain's status as a place where a part of Satī's dismembered body fell to Earth; a smashāna is a cremation ground, a favourite haunt of ghosts; an ukhara is a place where those who die will not be reborn again; and a vana is a forest where Lord Shiva resides forever.

12. These festivals are described in the section on 'Seasonal and Festival Sevā', Chapter VI,

13. As far as I know little has been written on the Praṇāmī Sampradāya (also known as Nijananda Sampradāya) in English. Wilson (1976) has a paragraph. A curious aspect of temple worship in this sect is that the deities are not represented in the form of material images but simply as empty garments (shṛṅgār) adorned with crowns (mukuṭ) and parasols (chattrī).

14. The Gomptī is a left bank tributary of the Ganges in the modern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, several hundred miles from Ujjain.

15. See, in this respect, Marfatia (1967), an avowed admirer of Shankarācārya's 'clear and bold dialectics' and a strong critic of Vallabhācārya's Shuddhādvaita.

16. CBC (pp.171-7). Braj Bhāṣā is the vernacular spoken in Braj, that region lying between the Yamunā and the Ganges centering on Mathurā, where Krishna spent his youth before coming to Ujjain. The language is appropriate for several reasons but mainly because it is thought to have been spoken by Lord Krishna, and, being the vernacular, could have widespread appeal (Barz, 1976, pp.97f.). The sectarian texts in Braj Bhāṣā are nowadays very popular among Puṣṭimārgis and public readings are regularly held in temples.

17. See Vaudeville (1980: 5). The meaning of the posture of the Shrī Nāthjī image and the significance of Govardhan Mountain in the Vallabha tradition are discussed in Chapter V and VIII. Vaudeville has written detailed accounts of the sacred geography of Braj (1976) and of the Govardhan myth (1980).

18. See CVV (pp.171f.). The CVV (The Accounts of Eighty-Four Vaiṣṇavas) describes events in the lives of the exemplary disciples of Vallabhācārya and the DBVV (The Accounts of Two-Hundred-and-Fifty-Two Vaiṣṇavas) deals in the same way with the disciples of Vallabha's son Viṭṭhalnāthjī. According to Barz, the former text is the oldest known prose work in Braj Bhāṣā devotional literature (Barz, 1976, pp.100-103; see also Vaudeville, 1980, pp.15 and 16). Sectarian tradition reveals that the accounts were collected by Gokulnāthjī (1552-1641), the fourth son of Viṭṭhalnāthjī, and written down towards the end of his life. Harirāyjī (1591-1716) collected and arranged the accounts systematically and added commentaries, completing the task in 1696. It is reasonable to assume that the CVV was in existence by the mid-seventeenth century and the DBVV some decades later, though many of the stories would have been important components of the rich oral tradition of the Sampradāya since the sixteenth century.

19. 'Thrice-bent' (tribhanga), that is, the deity is bent at the neck, at the waist and at the right knee with the right calf passing over the left knee and the right foot resting on the toes.

20. 'Ṭhākurjī', meaning 'Lord' or 'Master' is the usual way of referring to temple and domestic images in Vallabha Sampradāya. Despite its respectful connotations, the term is understood and spoken more as a pet name than as a title.

21. The temple stands in an area that was once the grounds of the palace of Adil Beg, who according to his descendant, Mirjā Fahim Beg Jagirdar, was a general in Aurangzeb's army who joined forces with Ranojī Sindhia

before the latter conquered Malwa. Adil Beg's eldest son, Abdul Rahim Beg (Abdul Hakim Beg?) was well favoured by Mahādjī Sindhia (1765-94) and was made a Commander-in-Chief of his army. In 1770 AD he received a grant and certain privileges from Mahārānā Ur Singh of Mewar for helping the latter put down a rebellion among his chiefs. According to the present descendant, Mirjā Sāhib, who, incidentally, acknowledges the special connection between Shrī Madan Mohanjī and his family, Abdul Rahim Beg married a Rājput princess from Mewar sometime after the grant of 1770 AD. The princess happened to be a devotee of Madan Mohanjī, so Abdul Rahim Beg built a temple for her in the grounds of his palace and gave her lands for its upkeep.

22. One of the original aims of the School Committee published in a news sheet in 1964 was 'To germinate in them (the children) the feelings of love and devotion towards our Motherland and Nation and to infuse the principle and practice of fraternity and equality, irrespective of caste, creed and colour'. In 1975 the parents of a Muslim girl applied for permission for their daughter to attend the school, which was granted. Some Puṣṭimārgis opposed the admission of the new pupil and complained to the school managers. But the managers were supported entirely by the Mahārāja, His Highness Shrī Ranchorācāryajī, who conveyed his blessings to the girl saying that her admission was not undesirable at all. By 1977 there were three Muslim boys and one Muslim girl attending the school. I observed one of these children reciting kīrtans of the Puṣṭimārgi poets (Sūrdās and Nandadās) by heart.

23. Mādhavjī Murārjī is said to have acquired fabulous wealth by the grace of Shrī Nāthjī. One story tells of an occasion when Daulat Rao Sindhia was forced to turn to his subjects for financial help. Mādhavjī Murārjī obligingly offered his entire wealth such that bullock carts piled high with treasure stretched from his home in Kartik Cauk to Kāliyādah Palace, a distance of nearly three miles.

24. Generally, a deity with many arms is suggestive of divine majesty (māhātmya) and power (shakti), qualities associated with Krishna as the Supreme Lord, Puruṣottama, rather than as the intimate friend, child and lover. Since Puṣṭimārgi worship tends to lay great stress on establishing a warm and highly intimate relationship with Krishna conceived as a child or lover, perhaps this could be one reason why Shrī Puruṣottamajī is attended rather less than other Puṣṭimārgi temple deities in Ujjain.

CHAPTER III

THE VALLABHA DYNASTY

The category sampradāya is appropriately rendered 'sect' so long as we are mindful of its special ethnographic connotations as a vehicle for the transmission of a sacred tradition down the generations via a succession of preceptors and their disciples. As such the sampradāya provides the conceptual frame within which initiates apprehend their beliefs, rituals and social relationships. It is from within this frame of reference that I now intend to explore the principles that underlie the structure and organisation of Vallabhācārya Sampradāya. This will necessarily involve an examination of the institution of 'guru-ship' and the phenomenon of 'guru-worship' (guru-pūjā/guru-sevā) among the Mahārājas of the Vallabha Dynasty.

It has been recently suggested that structurally the Hindu ascetic sects appear to resemble tribes composed of segmentary lineages 'which perpetuate themselves by spiritual initiation rather than sexual reproduction and which exploit a territory for its alms rather than for its natural wealth' (Burghart, 1978:126, see also 1978b: 53). Viewed in this light the esoteric formula of initiation, the mantra, appears to serve as the life-blood of the sect which can be traced back through an arterial lineage of disciples and teachers to a founder who is identified or in some way associated with a particular divinity, being the source of the mantra's (and hence the sect's) unique origin. The mantra both ensures the preservation of, and is in turn preserved by, the preceptorial succession. Message and medium combine to form the segmentary structure of the sect.

Derivation from a divine source traced through an uninterrupted line of preceptors is the chief determinant of a sect's spiritual legitimacy and of its independence from other sects. It is also the basis of the spiritual authority and reputation of its latter-day leaders. For these reasons sectarian 'genealogies' are serious and generally highly elaborate affairs which contain useful information concerning the rationale underlying Hindu sectarianism and the problems encountered in sect organisation. It will come as no surprise to social anthropologists that there is evidence to suggest the manipulation of genealogies or at least the subtle reinterpretation of the principles on which they are based. Different versions usually correspond to rival claims to spiritual precedence between sects or to rival factions within a particular sect.

Nevertheless, at the highest conceptual level of this segmentary system there is a formal scheme that has long been widely acknowledged by Vaiṣṇavas, probably since before the time of Vallabhācārya. I refer to the division of Vaiṣṇavism into four primary traditions represented by four sampradāya each associated with a much revered founder-preceptor (ācārya), a particular tutelary deity and a unique mantra. The Four Sampradāya are as follows:[1]

1.	Rudra Sampradāya	founded by Viṣṇusvāmī (dates unknown) and traced to the god Shiva
2.	Shrī Sampradāya	founded by Rāmānuja (eleventh century) and traced to the goddess Lakṣmī
3.	Sanakadi Sampradāya	founded by Nimbārka (eleventh-twelfth centuries) and traced to Sanaka, Sananda, Sanātana and Sanatkumāra (the four mind-born sons of Brahma)
4.	Brahma Sampradāya	founded by Madhva (thirteenth century) and traced to the god Brahma

Implicit in this scheme is the notion that all Vaiṣṇava sects that emerged subsequently are ultimately traceable to the original Four Sampradāya. And yet in many instances it is difficult to ascertain the real circumstances surrounding the origin of a particular sect. Did it arise as a result of

secession from a larger body or was it independently established? The problem is further complicated by the fact that whereas some sects and sect factions have claimed spiritual pre-eminence by tracing their origins directly to one of the Four Sampradāya, others have avoided such claims by asserting their unique origins and absolute independence from all other sects. It is clear that further research in this field would require the student to distinguish between segmentation as a concept and as an empirical phenomenon.

Alternate strategies of the kind mentioned above appear in the history of the Rāmānanda sect. In the early years members preferred to stress their affiliation to the then larger and more prestigious sect founded by Rāmānuja, but in recent times they have declared their absolute independence from the older movement by denying that Rāmānanda was a preceptorial successor to Rāmānuja. Richard Burghart, who has made a special study of the manipulation of spiritual genealogies in this sect, has explained these and other versions with reference to the competition for resources in the form of devotees, land and patronage. He concludes that the 'history' of the sect 'is as much a product of the success of the sect as it is an account of that success' (1978:136).

A similar though chronologically reversed strategy occurs in the history of the Caitanya sect. We know that some learned devotees have contrived to trace their tradition to Madhva, the founder of Brahma Sampradāya, though the link was not pressed with any conviction until relatively late in the eighteenth century.[2]

We shall come across claims of this kind within Puṣṭimārga. There are some Puṣṭimārgis who place Vallabha in a line of preceptorial succession beginning with Viṣṇusvāmī, the founder of Rudra Sampradāya, while there are others who vehemently deny the connection. As far as I am aware the earliest record which links Vallabha with Viṣṇusvāmī appears in a work attributed to Gadādhara, a disciple of Vallabha's second son, Viṭṭhalnāthjī;

and yet, as with the Caitanya sect, it was not until much later (during the eighteenth century) that the theory gained significant ground. Incidentally, in his work entitled Sampradāyapradīpa (c. 1553) Gadādhara gives his own version of the segmentary evolution of sects. He lists the Four Sampradāya as normal and then goes on to mention four Secondary Sampradāya (Upa-Sampradāya) including those associated with Caitanya, Nanda (Rāmānanda ?), Svarūpa and Prakāsha derived from Viṣṇusvāmī, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka and Madhva respectively. Of these secondary sects, Gadādhara says that Svarūpa and Prakāsha have become extinct, while Caitanya and Nanda are still in existence.[3]

The Viṣṇusvāmī connection is one of several issues concerning the justification of the Sampradāya. I shall also need to examine the position of Vallabhācārya as an intermediary between Lord Krishna and the devotee, or more especially as an avatāra or incarnation of Krishna. A full appreciation of the spiritual character of the founder is crucial to an understanding of the authority assumed by his successors who are regarded as sharing in their illustrious predecessor's own unique personality. As in other sects, principles of origin and descent are the bases of the spiritual-cum-secular authority of preceptors within the organisation. And yet unlike the major Hindu ascetic sects, Vallabhācārya Sampradāya is not formed around a nucleus of renouncers, nor is asceticism formally tolerated within the movement; rather preceptors are always householders who owe their status to their patrilineal descent from Vallabha. It is particularly appropriate, therefore, to refer to the 'Vallabha Dynasty', being an equivalent of the sectarian Vallabha-vaṅsha or Vallabha-kula (the 'lineage' or 'family' of Vallabha).

It is possible, therefore, to identify three overlapping notions of 'descent' with regard to the Vallabha Dynasty. In the first place, there is hereditary succession from father to son. We might expect this line of descent to extend back to Vallabha's own forefathers. In the second place,

there is spiritual succession from guru to disciple by means of the initiatory mantra. Mahārājas are initiated by their own fathers and grandfathers whom they regard as gurus. Some devotees trace the succession back to the preceptor Viṣṇusvāmī. And in the third place, there is the notion of a succession of avatāra (which literally means a 'down-coming' or 'descent'), beginning with Vallabhācārya and constantly repeated in his descendants. This lays stress on the direct and unique origin of Vallabha who appears again and again in the form of his own progeny. In this way the three principles stress different but not exclusive aspects of spiritual succession. The fact that there is some flexibility in the articulation of these principles means that there are varying interpretations of the authority and position of the Mahārājas and their rights over persons and things offered for divine consecration.

I have already mentioned in the Introduction something of the long-standing controversy surrounding the bases of the Mahārājas' spiritual authority and its practical implications. In the eyes of some devotees, Vallabha and his second son, Viṭṭhalnāthjī, are revered as avatāra of Krishna and objects of equal, if not even more intense, devotion, refuge and surrender. Their descendants have also enjoyed a highly exalted position as incarnations. But they have been denounced by some sectaries and outsiders for abusing their position by falsely claiming to be avatāra and hence of soliciting a grotesque and misplaced dedication from their followers. Nevertheless, it would be a distortion of the subtleties and rationale of non-dualistic thought to make the facile assumption that the main point in question as far as devotees are concerned is whether the Mahārājas are gods or mere mortals. The evidence will show that rationalisations of their spiritual standing are typically ambiguous, reflecting in part their mysterious role as intermediaries between Krishna and the devotee. I now propose to examine the various and often ambiguous beliefs and assumptions underlying the role of the Mahārājas as divine intermediaries and to explore their significance as justifications for the authority which they claim

and with which they are credited. This will involve a consideration of the relationship between the Mahārāja and the devotee as revealed in ritual and non-ritual encounters described in popular sectarian texts, reported by informants and directly observed in the field. First, however, I shall briefly consider the significance of the guru-disciple institution and the pivotal position of the guru in the wider context of the Bhakti Movement, for this is a theme that is central to the study of Indian sectarianism.

Bhakti and the Adoration of the Guru

The institutionalised relationship between the guru as spiritual mentor and the disciple (shiṣya or celā) has effectively contributed to the preservation of ancient Hindu scriptures by providing an unbroken channel for the oral transmission of the Vedas from one generation to another. In the Upaniṣads the guru is depicted as a spiritual guide and teacher who encourages his disciples to memorise the sacred texts by heart and to comprehend their innermost message. For his own part the disciple is expected to serve his master in an attitude of humble and unquestioning obedience. His dedication is absolute yet voluntary. The guru's authority takes precedence over that of the disciple's father. It is significant that the guru expects no payment for his didactic efforts; instead he receives gifts and services given by his disciples in a spirit of selfless devotion. The scene evoked by the Upaniṣads is one of a learned and elderly ascetic living in a forest clearing and imparting an esoteric knowledge to an attentive band of young disciples.

It was in this form that the institution was incorporated in the traditional scheme of the four āshramas or Stages of Life. After his own investiture with the sacred thread at the age of about eight years, the young Brahman boy left his parental home in order to study the Vedas as an unmarried student (brahmacārin) at the home of his guru. Having graduated in the Vedas, he would return to his family, marry and lead a

householder's life (grhastha) until the birth of his own son's son, whereupon, having established his line, he would again leave his home to become a forest hermit (vānaprastha), attempting to free his mind of all worldly desires. Finally, at an advanced age, he would become a homeless wanderer (sannyāsin) having renounced all worldly ties and possessions. This strict regulation of the life-cycle was probably rarely followed in practice. Only a few would have experienced the first stage and perhaps even fewer would have passed beyond the second. But there was also a small though by no means insignificant minority that deviated from the classical sequence by forsaking the life of the householder at an early age, or by omitting it altogether, in order to concentrate entirely on the quest for personal salvation as renouncers. This would have involved a lengthy and rigorous period of preparation under the supervision of a teacher, himself an ascetic who had prematurely given up a worldly career. Some teachers were more widely celebrated than others, revered not only for their didactic skills but also for the divine realisation which they had achieved through their own strenuous contemplative efforts. Whereas in the early Upaniṣads the guru's guidance is advocated as preferable in the search for truth, it is later deemed imperative. The guru is regarded as in a sense equal to the Ultimate Truth (Brahman) which he has discovered within his own Self (Ātman). As one of the later Upaniṣads concludes:

> If these truths have been told to a high-minded man, who feels the highest devotion for God, and for his Guru as for God, then they will shine forth - then they will shine forth indeed.[4]

Nevertheless, in this form the guru-disciple institution remained small and introverted. But with the rise of the devotional approach to the divine it provided the basis for the development of heterodox religious movements of massive proportions.

It is probable that the later inclusion of renunciation and hence the quest for liberation (mokṣa) as the fourth and final Stage of Life was a cunning contrivance of Brahmanic orthodoxy designed to cope with what must

have been regarded by Brahmans as a deviant and antagonistic form of religiosity. Yet the Brahman continued to feel uncomfortable with the renouncer's eccentricities; as Dumont suggests, there is implicit within the fourfold scheme of life a 'subdued hostility to renunciation itself' (1980:274). We have already mentioned the importance that Dumont attaches to the renouncer's contribution as the 'inventor of bhakti' to the emergence of sects and how he is coaxed back into the world through the ancient institution of guru-ship.[5] The guru-disciple relationship becomes the bridge by which the renouncer (qua guru) re-establishes contact with men-in-the-world (qua disciples) with the result that the role of guru is instilled with a new authority and the relationship with the disciple acquires a new meaning.

Westerners have been impressed by the extravagant respect paid to religious preceptors in India, especially in devotional contexts. The enhancement of the position of the guru with the rise of the medieval Vaiṣnava sects did not escape the attention of Max Weber (Bendix, 1966: 189-193). Grierson expressed some surprise that the first line of the Bhakta-Māl, a prominent early seventeenth century text of the Bhakti Movement, gives devotion (Bhakti), the devotee (Bhakta), the Supreme Lord (Bhagavanta) and the preceptor (Guru) as the four indispensible components of religion. 'Anyone will admit,' he continues, 'that the first three are essentials, but few Westerners would think of adding the fourth.' He also notes that some sects have gone further than others in the veneration of gurus by citing the case of the 'Vallabhāchāris' among whom such devotion 'is carried to incredible extremes' (Grierson, 1908-21, p.546).

The emergence of sect-organised bhakti was accompanied by a significant modification and enhancement of the guru's authority. In the present state of research the precise details and underlying causes of this transformation are uncertain. Two general trends stand out. In the first place, the guru became the focus around which devotional cults were organised and

which subsequently developed into sects. The traditional idea of the guru as a spiritual instructor and a thinker withdrawn from mainstream society was superseded by one of the guru as an influential leader controlling much wealth in the form of endowments, active in the administration of monasteries and temples, and extending his authority over the secular lives of a substantial number of householders as well as other ascetic disciples. In the second place, in his new role as a bestower of divine grace, the guru became the object of a popular and highly enthusiastic cult of loving devotion. The sedate respect paid to the teacher of the Upaniṣads was transformed through bhakti into an intense form of emotional adoration. Whereas the former was revered as a god for the divinity which he had realised within himself, the way was open in the popular imagination for some founders of devotional sects to be worshipped either during their lifetimes or posthumously as avatāra or incarnations of divinity who had appeared on earth for the specific purpose of saving souls as a deliberate act of compassion. The path to salvation conceived as communion with a personal god was not so much a matter of following the guru's advice and example, but devotion to one who exercised the power of dispensing grace and who could make manifest at a stroke the divinity which had hitherto lain dormant within the soul.

The personality attributed to the founder of a sect is of crucial relevance to our understanding of Hindu sectarianism. Looking back at those saints who were instrumental in the establishment of sects we see that although they preached a common message of salvation by means of devotion, their teachings are sharply distinguished as if branded with the personal insignia of those responsible for their revelation. This is partly a consequence of the customary emphasis on loyalty and wholehearted submission to one particular guru to the exclusion of all other gurus. But even more significant is the tendency to regard the message and the man as inseparable such that the founder is in a sense the embodiment of

his own unique message holding the sole monopoly over the dispensation of grace in the particular path which he presents to his followers. It may be objected here that I am not distinguishing between the guru founder and his successors - surely only the founder can be the unique embodiment of a unique message? As I shall explain below, the Mahārājas as successors to Vallabha are also attributed with an individual genius inasmuch as they are believed to partake of the special personal qualities of their great predecessor.

Vallabhācārya as Divine Intermediary

It is not my intention to provide a detailed historical account of Vallabhācārya's life; rather I shall concentrate on certain ideas and episodes drawn from a living sectarian tradition which will help to elucidate the special place he holds in the eyes of his devotees.

In so far as he maintained a profound respect for his ancestral faith and endeavoured to present his teachings as a legitimate interpretation of the scriptures,[6] Vallabhācārya may be regarded as an orthodox Hindu philosopher whose outstanding contribution to Hindu thought lay in his theory of the soul's relationship to the divine which is known as Shuddhādvaita, or Pure Non-Dualism, as distinct from the Advaita (Non-Dualism) of Shankara and the Vishiṣṭādvaita (Qualified Non-Dualism) of Rāmānuja. According to tradition Vallabha explained this theory to great effect during a grand debate on the interpretation of scriptures held at the south Indian city of Vijayanagar under the sponsorship of king Krishnadevarāya. Just as the Vaiṣṇavas (including representatives of the Madhva, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka and Viṣṇusvāmī sects) were about to concede the debate in favour of the followers of Shankarācārya, Vallabha entered the fray as their spokesman and gained a resounding victory over his opponents while also exposing errors in the arguments of his allies. In recognition of this triumph, Vallabha was honoured with the title of ācārya or 'preceptor' and offered the leadership of the sampradāyas of either Madhva or Viṣnusvāmī. The

significance of his supposed acceptance of the latter will be discussed presently.

Nevertheless, Vallabhācārya was not merely a philosopher-teacher for he was also actively involved and directly instrumental in the salvation of souls. The problem which confronted him according to his own exposition in a brief work entitled Shrīkrsnāshrayaḥ was that the world had become so contaminated with impurities (dosa), and souls (jīvas) so utterly miserable and ignorant - inevitable symptoms of the current degenerate Kali Age - that the time-honoured spiritual paths had become too difficult, if not nigh impossible, to follow. The path of ritualistic conformity to traditional Vedic rules and regulations, the Maryādāmārga, was therefore wholly unefficacious and quite unsuitable since men had become too proud, ignorant and selfish to raise themselves by their own efforts. This spiritual malaise could never be cured by a revival of pristine ways and means, but required a specific appropriate to the changed conditions which now prevailed among men. Vallabha preached sole reliance on the saving grace (anugraha) of Lord Krishna, for only Krishna could remove the impurities which darkened the soul. With this in mind, Vallabha established a new 'path', the Puṣṭimārga or Path (mārga) of Grace (puṣṭi), which placed absolute stress on the need for divine compassion rather than self-effort in the quest for salvation. For Vallabha and his followers, Shuddhādvaita provided the only true explanation of the estrangement of the soul and the divine, and Puṣṭimārga the only way of achieving a reconciliation.

As an acārya, Vallabha was regarded as a man of deep spiritual knowledge able to prove his doctrines by acute scriptural exegesis. But his message was of more immediate divine origin, as indeed was his very form. He is frequently referred to as Kṛṣṇa-avatāra, an incarnation of Lord Krishna. The term avatāra has been applied to many outstanding religious personalities in India, Shrī Aurobindo being a recent example, though its most familiar usage is with reference to the ten incarnations of Vishnu who manifested

themselves during periods of cosmic crisis in order to save the world from impending chaos. As the eighth incarnation of Vishnu, Krishna appeared as a cowherd in Braj for the specific purpose of ridding the land of the evil King Kaṃsa and other notorious demons. I can best illustrate the avatāra's role by the following analogy translated by an informant and attributed by him to the Subhodinī, Vallabha's commentary on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa:

> The incarnation of the Lord occurs when the Supreme Being condescends to appear here as an earthly being. A person who falls into a well can be saved by throwing him a rope; but if the distressed person begins to drown, then it becomes necessary for someone else to jump down the well in order to rescue him. Similarly, when the world falls into extreme distress, the Lord personally appears.

Vallabha's own mission is clearly expressed here. In Puṣṭimārga, Lord Krishna is exalted as the Supreme Being, Shrī Parabrahman. The distressed soul is the man in the well - too weak to catch hold of the rope or even too preoccupied with his own suffering to notice it. Vallabha is the incarnation of Krishna who descends into the well in order to rescue the soul which is overcome by the stagnant waters of this Kali Age. He achieved this rescue mission by pulling souls from the well thereby cleansing them of their impurities and so making them fit to approach Lord Krishna.

Indian scriptures (particularly the Mahābhārata) refer to both total and partial avatāra (see Parrinder, 1970, p.20 and elsewhere). Basham, referring to a passage in the Bhagavad Gītā, 'Whatever is mighty or fortunate or strong springs from a portion of my glory' (X. 41), comments:

> In this sense every good or great man was thought of as a partial incarnation of Vishnu. The ten chief incarnations, however, are of a more special type, for in them the full essence of the god is believed to have taken flesh to save the world from imminent danger or total destruction. (1971:304)

Nevertheless, the terms are flexible and governed by the religious convictions of the believer.

But the notion of a partial avatāra holds good when we consider some of the more specific appellations of Vallabha, among them Shrī Kṛṣṇa kā

Mukhārvinda ('the lotus-like mouth of Lord Krishna'), Mukhavatāra ('an incarnation of the mouth' of Lord Krishna), Agnisvarūpa ('the essential form of Agni'), and Vaishvānara ('relating to all men', an epithet of Vishnu or the fire-god Agni and particularly of the digestive fire; see Bhagavad Gītā, XV, 14). These terms are to be explained with reference to Vallabha's own birth or 'manifestation', which I shall now summarise.

Vallabha was the second son of Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa, a Telugu Brahman whose native village was situated on the south bank of the Godāveri river in south India (modern Andhra Pradesh). It is said that one of Lakṣmaṇa's ancestors, Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, had received a divine promise that after he and his descendants had completed one hundred soma sacrifices, then the Lord Himself would take birth in the family as an avatāra. Nārāyaṇa performed an impressive total of thirty-two sacrifices, followed by Gangādhara (twenty-eight), Gaṇapati (thirty) and Vallabha Bhaṭṭa (five). Finally Lakṣmaṇa completed five sacrifices making a total of one hundred whereupon Lord Krishna appeared to him in a dream and informed him that he was about to take birth as Lakṣmaṇa's son. Soon afterwards Lakṣmaṇa and his wife, Illammāgārū, left their village and proceeded to the holy city of Vārāṇasī where they intended to settle for the rest of their lives. But by 1478 AD, the relative tranquility of the city was threatened by worries of an impending invasion. It was rumoured that the Mughal Emperor, Buhlul Lodi, desired the temple treasures of Vārāṇaṣī to finance his military expeditions. Lakṣmaṇa and his wife, who was well advanced in pregnancy, fled the city and journeyed towards the south. Passing through a forest near Campāraṇya (modern Raipur District, Madhya Pradesh), the physical strain of the journey finally caught up with Illammāgārū. Being then eight months pregnant, she could go no further. The couple had no choice but to settle in the forest for the night. There, at midnight beneath a spreading shamī tree, the exhausted Illammāgārū prematurely gave birth to a stillborn child; at least as far as the parents could tell the child showed no signs of life. The grief-stricken couple

wrapped the baby in shamī leaves and placed him under the tree and moved on to the next town in search of sleep and shelter. But while they slept, Lord Krishna again appeared to Lakṣmaṇa in a dream and told him that the child was alive and well in the forest. On waking, the couple hurried back to the spot and there beheld their son playing in the middle of a burning hearth which had served to protect him during the hours of darkness. Illammāgārū extended her arms into the flames and retrieved her beloved son. Miraculously, she was not burned.

What happened during that eventful night is vividly illustrated in a sectarian painting widely reproduced in popular books and pamphlets. It depicts Lord Krishna and Rādhā (or Shrī Svāminījī as she is known in the sect) sitting side-by-side in a forest clearing. A beam of fire issues from their mouths and completely encircles the infant Vallabha. Vallabha is standing with his feet in the 'thrice-bent' position of the flute-playing Krishna (see Chapter II, footnote 18). His complexion is blue like that of Krishna.

Seen in the context of the birth story, this picture effectively combines the two elements which are basic to Vallabha's status as an avatāra and divine intermediary, viz. an incarnation of the holy mouth of Lord Krishna and an incarnation of the fire-god Agni. By way of explanation, the Nijvārtā (NGV), a traditional account of the life of Vallabha,[7] reasons as follows:

> Shrī Ācāryajī is the embodiment of Puruṣottama
> So he is radiant (i.e. like fire)
> So he is also a part of Agni
> So he was manifested out of a fiery hearth (Agni kuṇḍ)
> And so all men know him in the form of Agni (Agni rūpa)
>
> Agni is the divine (ādhidaivika as opposed to ādhibhautika or 'physical') fire that resides in the holy mouth of Puruṣottama.
> So as an incarnation of the divine mouth, Shrī Ācāryaji is also an embodiment of Agni (NGV, pp. 1-2).

The full significance of the symbolic link between the divine mouth and the divine fire becomes apparent when we consider the birth in a wider

mythological context. First of all, what is the significance of the link with Agni?

Vallabha was born into the family of Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa as a result of one hundred sacrifices performed by members of that family over several generations. The term for the sacrificial hearth, Agni-kuṇḍ, wherein dwells Agni, the Oblation Eater, is also used to denote the fire which enveloped the infant Vallabha and from whence he emerged. At one level the birth of Vallabha can be seen as a variation on a mythological theme of creation associated with fire sacrifice. Consider, for example, a myth in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa which tells how Prajāpati, who at first existed alone, desired progeny. He practised asceticism and generated Agni from his mouth. Since Agni was a consumer of food he threatened to eat Prajāpati. The terrified Prajāpati rubbed his hands together and produced clarified butter which he offered to Agni thereby appeasing him. From this offering the plants were born. The myth continues:

> Prajāpati performed the offering, produced progeny, and saved himself from Agni, who was death and who was about to devour him. And whoever knows this and offers the Agnihotra oblation, he produces progeny just as Prajāpati produced progeny... And whenever one dies and is placed in the fire, he is reborn from the fire just as he is born from his mother and father, for the fire consumes only his body. (trans. O'Flaherty, 1975: 33).

Similarly, Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa and his forefathers performed one hundred soma sacrifices to Agni, the God of a Hundred Sacrifices, and produced progeny in Vallabha who was born dead and reborn from fire. The significance of this rebirth is that Vallabha acquires a worldly/mundane (laukika) body and yet is identified with an other-worldly/sacred (alaukika) context, or as Barz puts it:

> Perhaps the legend of the revival of the stillborn infant Vallabhācārya within the divine, purifying protective fire is the Sampradāya's way of removing its founder from the laukika existence and placing him in the alaukika from the moment of his birth. Since Vallabhācārya was born dead, he was able to acquire a human - laukika - form without ever having had laukika life; then he received alaukika life from the alaukika fire. (1976: 25)

That Vallabha was born at the foot of a shamī tree and kindled

within shamī leaves is particularly appropriate because the tree is traditionally associated with Agni. A legend in the Mahābhārata tells how Agni concealed himself from the gods by entering the tree. When the gods finally discovered him they made the tree the abode of fire for ritual purposes, for the kindling of the sacrificial hearth - 'From that time forth, Agni is considered to be within the interiors of samī trees, and men use it as a means of producing fire' (O'Flaherty, 1975: 103; see also Vaudeville, 1976:201 on the significance of the shamī tree in Vallabha Sampradāya).

Just as Agni as an incarnation of the mouth of the Supreme Lord is known as the Purifier (Pavaka), who purifies the world by consuming it in fire, who is the agent of rebirth and progeny through fire, so Vallabhācārya, as an incarnation of the mouth of Lord Krishna, is the divine protective fire who accepts initiates by burning away their impurities, thereby raising them from a laukika to an alaukika level of existence. But there is an element of ambiguity in Agni's fiery attributes: on the one hand, his fire is an agent of purification and protection, while on the other hand, it is often a cause of much misery for those who suffer its heat. From a sectarian viewpoint, however, the real difference lies in the way fire is perceived. Ordinary (laukika) fire is cool at a distance and hot close by. Divine (alaukika) fire as perceived by divine souls (daivi jīva) is quite the opposite. Because she was a divine soul, Vallabha's mother could extend her arms into the flames and retrieve her son without sustaining burns.

This alaukika mode of perception is caught up in the general motif of concealment and revelation which is dominant in Krishna mythology. The god, participating in divine sport (līlā), chooses to reveal himself to some and to remain concealed from others; concealing his awful majesty within the body of a helpless and mischievous infant. In view of the present concern with oral metaphors we should cite here the famous episode

in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa when Yashodā scolds her son for eating dirt, peers into his tiny mouth, and there beholds the entire universe. Similarly, the NGV explains that Vallabha keeps his true identity as an actual manifestation of Lord Krishna concealed. Consequently, most men think of him as a great teacher or priest. But those souls which have been personally accepted by Vallabha are able to perceive him in his true form as an actual manifestation of Lord Krishna.

The full significance of the parallel between Vallabha and Agni lies in the dual mythological role of the latter. Agni is a messenger between men and the gods, the Oblation Eater and Oblation Bearer who accepts the offerings of the soma sacrifice (soma being the nectarine substance consumed by the gods in order to sustain their mortality) and carries them to the gods. As such, Agni is crucial to both men and gods: without him men cannot obtain the fruits of their sacrifices and gods cannot enjoy the sacrificial offerings. Furthermore, Agni is not only a messenger of man, but also a messenger of ths gods. This aspect of Agni becomes prominent in later versions of his mythology '... moving sometimes from earth to heaven but more often from heaven to earth' (O'Flaherty, 1975: 97). Like Agni, Vallabha is an intermediary, in this case between the human soul (jīva) and Bhagavān Krishna. For a fuller explanation of Vallabha's mission in this respect I can do no better than cite Barz's excellent summary:

> Like Agni Vallabhācārya is both the messenger that goes between Bhagavān and the jīvas and the path, in his role as the expounder of the Puṣṭimārga, that leads the jīvas to Bhagavān; Vallabhācārya the avatāra of the divine mouth which contains the divine fire and the avatāra of that fire itself, is the way from the human to the divine, from the laukika to the alaukika, from the ādhibhautika to the ādhidaivika. Furthermore, Vallabhācārya's role is just as vital to Bhagavān as it is to the jīvas: Bhagavān desires the jīvas to realize the bliss of union with him; but for this to occur, the jīvas must have contact with the purifying ādhidaivika fire that is Vallabhācārya. (Barz, 1976: 30-31)

What then is the significance of Vallabhācārya's message? How is it

communicated from Lord Krishna to Vallabha to the devotee? And what does the mode of communication reveal about Vallabha's position in the Sampradāya as a divine intermediary? We can begin to answer these questions by referring to an episode which Puṣṭimārgis regard as the central and most significant event in the history of the Sampradāya:

> Once while resting on the bank of the Yamunā beneath a chonkar (= shamī) tree at Gokul near the temple of Shrī Dvārakanāthjī, Shrī Ācaryajī was deeply troubled as to how he could carry out Shri Ṭhākurjī's order to bring about a reconciliation of human souls, which had become so utterly defiled, and the Lord, who is a paragon of such excellent qualities. Suddenly, Ṭhākurjī appeared before him and enquired 'Why are you so worried?' Shrī Ācārayajī replied, 'You know that these souls are thoroughly impure, so how can I join them to you?' Then Ṭhākurjī consoled him, saying 'Those whom you initiate will be delivered of all their faults and I will receive them personally'. (trans. from CVV, p. 4).

And so it was, as Vallabhācārya himself records in his Siddhāntarahasyam,[8] that at midnight on the eleventh day of the Bright Half of the month of Shrāvaṇ Lord Krishna personally appeared before him and gave to him the sacred mantra by means of which souls could be cleansed of their impurities and received by the Lord. The account from which the above translation derives goes on to explain that although Vallabha's closest disciple, Dāmodardās Harsānī (affectionately known to Vallabha as Damalā) was also present at the time and actually heard Krishna's voice, he was unable to understand it. Only after his master had repeated the words to him on the following morning was he able fully to comprehend their inner meaning. The reasons given in Harirāyjī's interpretation of the event are revealing in this respect. First, Shrī Ṭhākurjī (Lord Krishna) has stated that whosoever wishes to realise the transcendental meaning of his teachings will only succeed on receipt of the guru's favour since 'True knowledge can only be obtained through the guru's grace'. Second, if Damalā had understood Shrī Ṭhākurjī's message directly, then he would have become Shrī Ṭhākurjī's disciple (sevak) ; but Damalā was the disciple of Shrī Ācāryajī, therefore only when his guru explained the Lord's message did

Damalā understand it. Third, if Damalā had understood Shrī Ṭhākurjī's words then his capacity for divine intuition would have equalled that of his guru; so he admitted to Shrī Ācāryajī that indeed he had not understood (?).

I was often told that Puṣṭimārgis should refrain from repeating their special mantra in the company of others, even though it is widely known outside the sect and frequently printed in sectarian publications. But no matter how widely known, the mantra remains esoteric in the sense that it is spiritually meaningless and unefficacious unless communicated to the devotee by the grace of a guru-descendant of Vallabhācārya.

The above incident can be seen as serving to define and confirm the pivotal position of Vallabhācārya as guru and divine intermediary in the Path of Grace which he established by means of the directly revealed initiation formula. Lord Krishna cannot communicate his love and compassion to souls and hence cannot enjoy communion with them except through Vallabhācārya. Alternatively, the soul cannot receive the Lord's grace and hence cannot enjoy a personal relationship with the Lord except through Vallabhācārya. In the same passage it is stressed that 'In this path nothing can be achieved without the grace (anugraha) of Shrī Ācāryajī'. He is, in effect, the bestower of divine grace. In other words, for Krishna to bestow his grace he must first delegate the right of dispensing grace to Vallabha who is his very own incarnation self-manifested at a specific time and for a specific purpose. Whereas in Krishna grace is diffuse, remote and unchannelled, through Vallabha it becomes concentrated and more immediate to the devotee.

From the point of view of the disciple there is considerable scope for the enhancement of the guru's spiritual standing. This may be accompanied by an intensification of the disciple's devotional response: devotion to Vallabhācārya might conceivably surpass devotion to Lord Krishna. Damalā, Vallabha's closest disciple, is the pre-eminent sectarian example of such

a tendency. He was called 'Amalā' meaning 'Pure' by his guru 'Because he had a greater love for Shrī Ācāryajī than for Shrī Ṭhākurjī'. One story tells how once Vallabha was sleeping in Damalā's lap when Lord Krishna as Shrī Nāthjī approached them. But Damalā ordered the Lord to wait at a distance so as not to disturb his master. Shrī Nāthjī was delighted on observing Damalā's devotion to his guru and waited patiently until Vallabha had woken before sitting in his lap. Perhaps the most explicit reference to the importance of Vallabhācārya as a bestower of grace occurs in the same Vārtā:

> Shrī Gusainjī (Vallabha's son and successor) asked Dāmodardās 'What do you think of Shrī Ācāryajī?' Dāmodardās replied 'I think that he is greater than the Lord'.
> Shrī Gusainjī enquired further, 'Why do you say that he is greater than the Lord?'.
> 'Mahārāja!', he replied, 'the bestower of the gift is even greater than the gift. Even greater than a man's wealth is the source from where he obtained it. Shrī Ācāryajī bestows the priceless treasure of the Lord so I believe he is even greater than that treasure'. (trans. from CVV, pp. 3, 7 and 8)

I shall have more to say at a later stage on the implications of this devotional response, particularly with regard to the veneration of Vallabha's successors, the bestowers of the gift of Krishna's grace.

The Succession of Gurus

The chief precedent determining the method of spiritual succession in the Sampradāya was firmly established by Vallabhācārya when he decided to forsake the life of a celibate brahmacārin in order to marry and lead the life of a householder. Barz has rightly stressed the profound significance of this decision for the subsequent development of the sect:

> By marrying, Vallabhācārya, as the intermediary between the members of his Sampradāya and Shrī Kṛṣṇa, was not just demonstrating that marriage would not hinder a sevaka's progress towards the divine, he was setting an example that should be followed. Consequently, today there are no organized groups of sannyāsis within the Vallabhācārya Sampradāya and gurus and laymen alike marry. (1976: 32)

Indeed, Vallabhācārya openly warned against the dangers of taking the vows of an ascetic in his Sannyāsanirnayaḥ on the grounds that the sannyāsi's

lifestyle is essentially self-centred and a potential source of spiritual arrogance, and hence contrary to the spirit of selfless devotion to the divine which is the hallmark of his Path of Grace (ibid., pp. 32-34). A further effect of his marriage was the ensured continuation of the Sampradāya. Vallabha held the exclusive right granted to him by Lord Krishna to save souls by administering the Brahma-sambandha mantra. Unless this divine authority could be transferred to a successor, the path which he had established would come to an abrupt end after his passing. Lord Krishna himself ensured that the appropriate authority would pass to his descendants.

According to popular biographical accounts, including the relatively recent NGV, it was during Vallabha's second all-India pilgrimage that he visited the renowned Krishna image of Shrī Viṭṭhalnāthjī at Paṇḍhapur in Maharashtra and learned that it was the deity's wish to take birth in his family.[9] The reason given in the NGV is that since those spiritual paths based on the Vedas are no longer efficacious and since it is necessary for human souls to receive the grace of Lord Krishna for many generations to come, then it is absolutely essential that the Path of Grace be established on a more permanent footing. In compliance with Shrī Viṭṭhalnāthjī's bidding, Vallabha proceeded to Vārāṇasī and married Shrī Mahālakṣmī, the daughter of a Tailanga Brahman of his own caste. Later at Gokula in Braj, while playing with an image (svarūp) of Shrī Baldevjī (Krishna's elder brother also known as Balrāma), the deity (Baldevjī) informed him that it was Lord Krishna's wish that he also should take birth in Vallabha's family.[10]

Accordingly, Vallabha's first son, Shrī Gopīnāthjī, was born at Adela[11] in about 1511 AD and his second son, Shrī Viṭṭhalnāthjī, otherwise known as Shrī Gusainjī, about five years later. In 1531 Vallabhācārya finally took the vows of an ascetic and withdrew to spend the last days of his earthly life in a cottage of leaves on the banks of the Ganges at Vārāṇasī.[12] A few weeks later, having fully prepared himself for reunion with Lord Krishna, he summoned his family and ensured the perpetuation of the Puṣṭimārga

by entrusting the leadership of the sect to his eldest son, Gopīnāthjī. He then entered the Ganges and was consumed by the same divine fire that had first borne him in a lonely forest clearing near Campāraṇya:

> ... stooping into the water, he disappeared and a brilliant flame arose from the spot and in the presence of a host of spectators, ascended to heaven and was lost in the firmament. (Wilson, 1976:121)

But there was soon to be a dispute over the succession. Gopīnāthjī died in 1543 leaving one son, Puruṣottamjī, who was only a child at the time. Consequently, the leadership passed to Vallabha's next son, Viṭṭhalnāthjī. Whether Viṭṭhalnāthjī was acting as a regent during Puruṣottamjī's minority or else as a true successor in his own right is uncertain, though the former is more likely to be correct. Nevertheless, sectarian tradition has fully vindicated Viṭṭhalnāthjī as a rightful successor. The circumstances provided a clear cause for dispute. By the time Puruṣottamjī had reached the age of eighteen, a faction led by Kṛṣṇadās, the manager of the temple of Shrī Nāthjī, persuaded Puruṣottamjī to assume sole leadership of the Sampradāya and moved to bar Viṭṭhalnāthjī from the temple altogether causing him to endure the intense pain of separation from his beloved Shrī Nāthjī.[13] Puruṣottamjī's term as leader lasted for only a few months; he died leaving no heir and Viṭṭalnāthjī was acknowledged as the undisputed successor to Vallabhācārya.

When Viṭṭhalnāthjī died in 1586, the spiritual leadership of the Sampradāya, which had hitherto been restricted to one guru, was divided equally among his seven sons, each of whom inherited the exclusive right to initiate disciples by administering the Brahma-sambandha mantra. In addition they shared nine of the original Krishna images (svarūp) consecrated by Vallabhācārya, which they installed in separate temples in different regions of northern and western India. This distribution of spiritual authority led to the formation of seven divisions within the dynastic organisation of the sect known as the Seven Houses (Sāt Ghar) or Seven Seats (Sāt Gaddī).

Thereafter, the spiritual leadership of each House was passed down by a principle of primogeniture until the present day. Details of these Seven Houses are given below in order of the age seniority of Viṭṭhalnāthjī's seven sons.

	Son	Svarūp	Present Location
1	Giridharjī	Shrī Nāthjī	Nāthdwāra (Rājasthān)
		Shrī Navanītpriyajī	"
		Shrī Mathureshjī	Kotā (Rājasthān) *
2	Govindrāyjī	Shrī Viṭṭhalnāthjī	Nāthdwāra
3	Bālkṛṣṇajī	Shrī Dvārakānāthjī	Kāṅkarolī (Rājasthān)
4	Gokulnāthjī	Shrī Gokulnāthjī	Gokul (Braj, U.P.)
5	Ragunāthjī	Shrī Gokulcandramājī	Kāmavan (Rājasthān)
6	Yadunāthjī	Shrī Mukundrāyjī	Vārāṇasī (U.P.)
	**	Shrī Bālkṛṣṇajī	Sūrat (Gujarāt)
7	Ghanashyāmjī	Shrī Madanmohanjī	Kāmavan

* In 1953 the deity was shifted from Kotā to Jatīpurā in Braj for an unspecified period

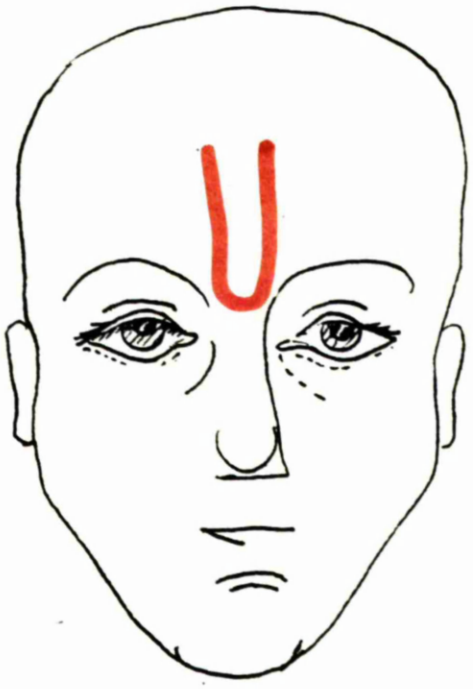
** At present there is a dispute between two of the descendants of Viṭṭhalnāthjī's sixth son. Both claim to be the rightful heirs to the leadership of the Sixth House.

Further fragmentation occurred within each House as younger brothers seceded from their joint households in order to establish their own temples which were subsequently inherited by their descendants.[14] According to official sectarian genealogies many of these sublineages came to an abrupt end either because sons died in youth or because they failed to produce heirs. But at times when the extinction of one of the Seven Houses seemed imminent, Mahārājas have ensured its survival by adopting a son from another House. Only the First and the Sixth Houses have continued uninterrupted, while the remaining five Houses have found it necessary to adopt sons from other Houses at some stage in their histories.[15]

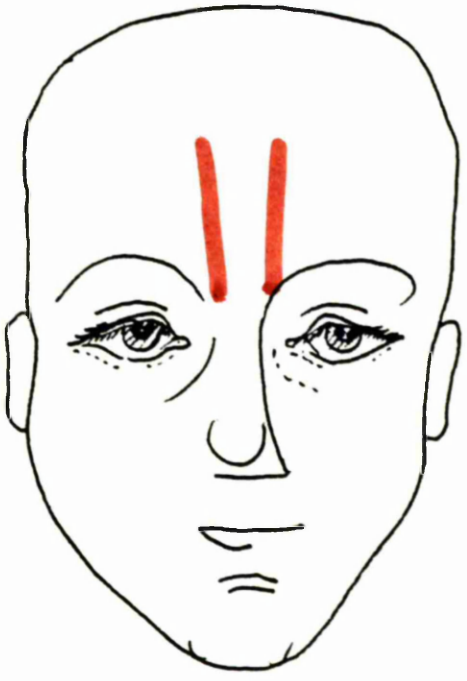
The Seven Houses are independently administered. They have their own temples and disciples and stress their distinctiveness through minor

variations in modes of temple worship. Segmentation of this kind is perhaps inevitable when there is stress on submission to individual gurus within the body of the movement. Yet this has not resulted in a proliferation of separate sub-sects. One's own guru is revered principally as a descendant of Vallabhācārya; hence to revere another descendant of the founder does not contravene the ideal of loyalty to one guru alone. Ideally, all descendants of Vallabhācārya are worthy of devotion. A devotee is primarily a member of the Sampradāya and secondarily a member of a specific House. Furthermore, no one House within the dynasty is spiritually superior, though the First enjoys additional prestige on account of its leader being descended from the eldest son of Viṭṭhalnāthjī. He is the custodian of the pre-eminent svarūp of Shrī Nāthjī situated at Nāthdwāra, the chief centre of sectarian pilgrimage. He is known by the title 'Tilkāyat', meaning a 'head' or 'chief',[16] with respect to the whole Sampradāya, whereas leaders of the remaining six Houses enjoy the same title only with respect to their particular sub-lineages. He is a chief among chiefs, primus inter pares.

This does not mean that all devotees of all Houses unreservedly subscribe to this notion of spiritual equality among Vallabha's descendants. For one thing, members of the Fourth House assert a far greater measure of independence than their co-sectaries in other Houses. In so doing they revere their own preceptors - descendants of Viṭṭhalnāthjī's fourth son, Gokulnāthjī - as the only legitimate spiritual successors of Vallabhācārya. This is quite unlike the situation in other Houses whose members show a particular devotion to their own preceptors while yet acknowledging the spiritual authority of every Mahārāja of the Vallabha Dynasty (Wilson, 1976: 135). The Gokulnāthīs distinguish themselves by a slight difference in the wording of the Brahma-sambandha mantra and by painting a minor but visibly conspicuous variation of the Puṣṭimārgi tilak on their foreheads (see Diagram 3 and footnote 17).



3- THE PUṢṬIMĀRGI TILAK



The 'unjoined' tilak as worn by members of the Fourth House of Gokulnāthjī

Practical demonstrations of dynastic solidarity under the overall initiative of the Tilkāyat are often accompanied by instances of friction between Houses. Both tendencies are apparent at large festivals, particularly those rare occasions when the original svarūpas are gathered together under the auspices of the Tilkāyat and with the support of leaders and followers belonging to all Houses. This grand event, known as the Sapta Svarūpa Utsava or the Festival of the Seven Svarūpas, was first celebrated by Giridharjī, the eldest of the seven sons of Viṭṭhalnāthjī, and held at Mathurā in 1566. Another was held at Nāthdwāra in 1739 when every Mahārāja in India was said to have attended. The Tilkāyat, Shrī Daujī, organised a similar congress in 1820-21. In his Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han, James Tod mentions that he was personally instrumental in effecting a meeting of the seven deities at Nāthdwāra in 1820, adding that he was left with the difficult task of keeping the peace and reconciling animosities between the custodians of the different deities:

> It cost me no little trouble, and still more anxiety, to keep the assembled multitudes at peace with each other, for they are as outrageous as any sectarians in contesting the supreme power and worship of their respective forms (rūpa). (Tod, Vol. 1, 1914:436, footnote 2)

More recently, in 1966, there was a reunion of five svarūpas at Nāthdwāra; but the custodians of the deities of Mathureshjī, Gokulnāthjī and Bālkṛṣṇajī refused to take along their deities due to what Jindel refers to as 'certain differences over the question of precedence and priorities' (1976: 74). During the Quingentennial birth celebrations of Vallabhācārya in 1978, I heard rumours that attempts to organise a full reunion of svarūpas had been thwarted because the heads of the Seven Houses had failed to come to a satisfactory agreement.

In general we can say that all patrilineal male descendants of Vallabhācārya retain the exclusive authority to initiate disciples into the Sampradāya and to consecrate divine images for worship in temples and the homes of devotees. Moreover, after they have received the initiation

mantra from their own fathers or grandfathers (usually between the ages of eight and thirteen), the Gosvāmīs have the right to serve their deities in the inner-rooms of the temple, a privilege which is only extended to priests belonging to specified Brahman castes.[18] The dynasty is strictly exogamous, receiving wives and husbands from another lineage of the same Brahman caste (Tailanga) known as Bhaṭṭa-kula. Matrimonial relations between Vallabha-kula and Bhaṭṭa-kula originally commenced with Viṭṭhalnāthjī's marriage to his second wife, Padmāvatī. The arrangement has a somewhat peculiar aspect in the context of Hindu marriage customs for whereas Bhaṭṭa wives married to Vallabha Gosvāmīs live virilocally, it is also the case that Bhaṭṭa husbands married to daughters of the Vallabha Dynasty are expected to live uxorilocally. According to one Sampradāyik tradition, the maintenance of daughters' husbands is the result of a curse placed by a jealous uncle on Viṭṭhalnāthjī and his progeny. And yet, for Viṭṭhalnāthjī, the curse was a blessing in disguise, for it was also his dearest wish that his daughters should remain in the bliss of close proximity to Krishna and the sacred dynasty rather than that they should descend into the impure and transient world of samsāra.[19] Even today, the daughters of Vallabha-kula, known as Beṭījī, are revered members of the Mahārājas' households who are allowed to perform intimate worship of the dynastic svarūpas in the private temple apartments. But daughters' husbands and children enjoy no such privileges being descendants of Bhaṭṭa-kula. I should add that at present there are nearly one hundred and seventy male descendants of Vallabhācārya in India who are known by the title of Mahārāja or Gosvāmī.[20]

I hope to study the subject of Vallabha-kula elsewhere; for the moment, however, my intention is to raise specific points that are pertinent to an understanding of the nature of the spiritual succession. Beginning with the succession crisis after the passing of Gopīnāthjī, it is interesting to note how tradition has attributed Viṭṭhalnāthjī with a spiritual eminence no less than that of Vallabha, greater by far than that of Gopīnāthjī,

and almost completely eclipsing that of GopīnāthjĪ's son, PuruṣottamjĪ. In so doing it has also provided firm justification for the spiritual standing of ViṭṭhalnāthjĪ's successors. Like his father, ViṭṭhalnāthjĪ is said to have gathered around him an intimate circle of disciples whose exemplary lives have been immortalised in the DBVV (Accounts of 252 Vaiṣṇavas). No such following is credited to GopīnāthjĪ. The Vārtā literature constantly repeats the idea that Vallabha, Viṭṭhalnāth and the deity Shrī NāthjĪ are conceived as being of one and the same form (rūpa) by their enlightened devotees. The difference in the divine personalities of the two sons of Vallabha has been elaborately contrived. Whereas GopīnāthjĪ is identified as an incarnation of Balrām (Krishna's elder brother), Viṭṭhalnāth is an incarnation of Lord Krishna, or more specifically an incarnation of the svarūp of ViṭṭhalnāthjĪ installed in a temple at Pandhapur in Maharashtra which is itself a manifestation of Lord Krishna.[21] Furthermore, it is also said that Shrī Balrām deliberately incarnated himself as GopīnāthjĪ for the specific purpose of preserving and prolonging the Maryādāmārga (the traditional path of conformity to Vedic rules and regulations), whereas Lord Krishna became incarnate as Viṭṭhalnāth for the purpose of prolonging and preserving the Puṣṭimārga newly established by Vallabhācārya. Consequently, those disciples initiated by GopīnāthjĪ are Maryādāmārgis, those initiated by ViṭṭhalnāthjĪ are Puṣṭimārgis.[22]

The inferences of the above statements are made particularly explicit in the Account of Vallabha's loyal disciple Damalā, referred to in the previous section. Damalā refused to touch the feet of ViṭṭhalnāthjĪ because he considered Vallabhācārya to be his sole guru. But Vallabhācārya ordered him to do so by informing him that he, Vallabha, resided in the heart of Viṭṭhalnāth. Thereafter, Viṭṭhalnāth invited Damalā to touch his feet with the implication that he should regard ViṭṭhalnāthjĪ as Vallabhācārya and with the self-same devotional sentiment (bhāva). This does not apply to GopīnāthjĪ, only to ViṭṭhalnāthjĪ and his successors:

> Most Vaiṣṇavas (i.e. Puṣṭimargis) do not touch the feet of Shrī Gopīnāthjī. The spiritual essence (bhāva) of Shrī Ācāryajī lives on in the seven sons of Shrī Gusainjī and their descendants (Vallabha-kula). For this reason Vaiṣṇavas prostrate themselves before them and touch their feet. This custom continues. (CVV, p. 11)

Foot-touching (caraṇasparsha) as a gesture of obeisance and respect is commonly practised in India in a variety of ritualised contexts: by a devotee before a deity, a disciple before his guru, and a son before his father. So also in Puṣṭimārga every meeting between a devotee and one of the guru-descendants of Vallabha commences with this gesture. Similarly, Gosvāmī-Bālaks perform the same gesture before their elders (F/FF/FB). It is significant that there is an interesting variation of this custom among Gosvāmīs on the annual occasion celebrating the time when Vallabha received the Brahma-sambandha initiation formula from Lord Krishna, a variation which serves to reinforce the notion of the continuing presence of Vallabhācārya in each and every one of his descendants and in a form that is not diminished from one generation to another. As one Gosvāmī explained to me:

> On Pavitra Ekādashī (Pure Eleventh) in Vallabha-vansha the father performs caraṇasparsha of his son, not as his son, but considering his son to be a descendant of Mahāprabhujī.

The spiritual succession of preceptors is essentially hereditary. Apostolic succession has always been unacceptable even in the case of a disciple as accomplished as Vallabhācārya's intimate companion, Dāmodardās Harsānī. There is, however, one notable exception, though it tends to confirm rather than contravene the general rule. An account in the DBVV (pp. 352-53) mentions one Tulsidās who was fostered by Viṭṭhalnāthjī and who grew up thinking that Viṭṭhalnāthjī was his real father. Later Tulsidās wondered why he had not been given the responsibility of performing the intimate worship of Ṭhākurjī along with his seven brothers, and so, out of compassion, Viṭṭhalnāth sent him on a special mission to the distant country of Sindh, giving him a svarūp (Shrī Gopīnāthjī) and investing him with the right to administer the Brahma-sambandha mantra

to souls seeking the refuge of Lord Krishna. Tulsidās, the 'eighth son' or 'Lālajī' as he is called in the Vārtā, established his Seat (Gaddī) in Sindh. His descendants continued there until the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 when they returned to Braj and settled in Vṛndāvan. This division of the Sampradāya is referred to as the Eighth House or Seat while its preceptors are also known as Mahārājas by virtue of their status as patrilineal descendants of the adopted son of Viṭṭhalnāthjī.

In the eyes of the Mahārājas and followers of the Seven Houses the successors of Lālajī (and the svarūp of Gopīnāthjī) are not considered to be of equal spiritual eminence to the dynastic descendants of Vallabha (and the nine original svarūpas in their custody). The Eighth Gaddī is rarely mentioned in sectarian literature. I have information that the preceptors of this Gaddī must themselves receive initiation from one or another Mahārāja of the Vallabha Dynasty before administering the same mantra to their own disciples.[23] As far as I could detect, the general attitude of the Mahārājas and devotees towards the leaders of the Eighth House is one of tolerance. So long as the Eighth Gaddī remains a distant relation and its leaders subordinate to the dynasty, there is no cause for friction. Only if the Eighth House sought to enhance its spiritual status on a par with the Seven Houses would the spiritual authority of the Mahārājas be threatened in principle, for it would put at issue their most jealously guarded privilege: their right to initiate disciples on grounds of dynastic rather than purely apostolic succession. This distinction between dynastic and apostolic succession brings us to the important question of Vallabhācārya's connection with Viṣṇusvāmī.

The Viṣṇusvāmī Connection

I have already mentioned Vallabha's victory over the Māyāvādins in a great debate held at Vijayanagar, the capital of King Krishnadevarāya. According to Sampradāyik tradition, Krishnadevarāya was so impressed by Vallabha's learning and sanctity that he arranged for the performance of

a special Kanakābhiṣekha ceremony in honour of Vallabhācārya, the subduer of the Māyāvād and the saviour of the Bhaktimārga. This grand ceremony, normally associated with the coronation of kings, was a form of anointment in which water was poured over the head of the honoured personage from chalices of solid gold. It is said that Krishnadevarāya himself performed the ceremony and conferred the titles of Ācārya (Great Preceptor) and Mahāprabhujī (Revered Great Lord) on Vallabha, applying a tilak to his forehead and adorning him with garlands. The king also presented him with thousands of gold coins, but the Ācārya kept only seven for the sevā of his Ṭhākurjī and distributed the rest among poor and learned Brahmans. The Kanakābhiṣekha was performed during the course of an all-India pilgrimage, and hence is closely associated with his status as a Digvijayin, or 'World Conqueror', in the eyes of sectaries.

There is also a tradition that after the debate, Vallabha was offered the leadership of Madhva Sampradāya and Viṣṇusvāmī Sampradāya by their respeetive leaders, the latter of which he accepted. A preceptorial successor to Viṣṇusvāmī named Bilvamangala applied the tilak to Vallabhācārya's brow.[24]

The Viṣṇusvāmī connection is something of an enigma for Indologists. Glasenapp grants the possibility of such a connection, though not without strong reservations (1934). Amarnath Ray demonstrates the difficulties in identifying and dating Viṣṇusvāmī, mainly because none of the works attributed to him are now extant (1932-33). He suggests that the reason for our lack of information is that Viṣṇusvāmī's personality has been eclipsed by the ascendancy of Vallabha (ibid., p. 177). A Puṣṭimārga scholar, Professor G.H. Bhatt, wrote a convincing article denying the possibility of any link whatsoever (1935). Some other sectarian scholars have followed suit (see Shah, 1969, pp. 481-483). Nevertheless, the tradition is preserved in some popular texts such as the CBC. It was also known and not seriously questioned by some of my Puṣṭimārgi

acquaintances in Ujjain.

My own interest in the matter is not one of establishing whether or not the association happens to be historically true or false (though I would concur with the latter), nor am I directly concerned with the task of determining the influence, if any, which Viṣṇusvāmī's doctrines had on Vallabha. Rather, what is significant is why the issue should have arisen in the first place and why it continues to be a subject of some disputation, not only among independent scholars, but also among some Puṣṭimārgis.

Vallabhācārya himself does not acknowledge a debt to Viṣṇusvāmī in any of his works, and in one rare reference describes Viṣṇusvāmī's doctrines as tamas, which from the context in which it occurs may be taken to mean that Viṣṇusvāmī's doctrines are dualistic as against Vallabha's own doctrines which are definitely non-dualistic.[25] Furthermore, we have seen above that Vallabha describes how he received the Brahma-sambandha initiation mantra directly from Lord Krishna, not from a guru-intermediary.

As I have already mentioned above, the earliest known work which records the Viṣṇusvāmī connection is the Sampradāyapradīpa of Gadādhara written around the middle of the sixteenth century. Thereafter, those sectarian texts which do stress Vallabha's relation to Viṣṇusvāmī are, according to G.H. Bhatt, relatively recent, i.e. written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (1935, pp. 400-461).

There are, and have been, those sectaries who who emphasise the Viṣṇusvāmī connection and those who deny it, or else remain silent on the subject. What then is the point of emphasising the connection? As Professor Bhatt allows, the reason is not far to seek. The traditional framework of the Four divinely ordained Sampradāya was probably already firmly established before Puṣṭimārga appeared, or if not before, then not long afterwards. It is not unlikely that some Puṣṭimārgis would have been well aware of the prestige and spiritual status to be gained for the sect

by associating it with one or another of the four fixed traditions thereby securing for it a place in time-hallowed antiquity. But as Professor Bhatt points out, the sampradāyas of Rāmānuja, Nimbārka and Rāmānanda were in their heydays

> ... the followers of Vallabha would not like to see the complete suppression of their own school by connecting it with these three powerful schools. The school of Viṣṇusvāmī was, however, losing the numerical strength of its followers and the Vallabhācāryans did not fail to take advantage of this situation. They at once started the theory that Vallabha's system was simply the continuation of the oldest Vaiṣṇava school of Viṣṇusvāmī and that Vallabha should, therefore, be recognised as one of the four Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas in the line of Viṣṇusvāmī. (Bhatt, 1935:463)

The popular accounts such as the CBC are careful to explain that Viṣṇusvāmī Sampradāya is the most ancient of the Four and therefore has a pre-eminent status. They also stress that Vallabha appeared as a manifestation of Shrī Krishna for the specific purpose of reviving the almost extinct tradition begun by Viṣṇusvāmī (see, for example, CBC, pp. 129-131). The originality of Vallabhācārya as an avatāra and his receipt of the Brahma-sambandha mantra directly from Lord Krishna is retained. He revives the failing path of Viṣṇusvāmī by breathing into it the grace (puṣṭi) of Bhagavān Krishna.

There is little doubt that this way of establishing the spiritual authenticity of Puṣṭimārga has been particularly advantageous to members when asserting the superiority of their sect over others. Puṣṭimārgis in Ujjain told me that during the Simhastha Melā in 1968 one of the Mahārājas had stressed the connection during a debate with other Vaiṣṇāva ācāryas and in support of his claim that Puṣṭimārgis should be allowed to bathe in the Shipra river before other sectarians. Needless to add, I was told that the debate was won for Puṣṭimārga.

But perhaps there is another reason for establishing a line of apostolic succession from Viṣṇusvāmī through Bilvamangala (and other ācāryas) to Vallabhācārya, viz. that it puts in question the principle of dynastic

succession which has always been followed in the Sampradāya. Again, Professor Bhatt enlightens us by suggesting that possibly some members of the Bhaṭṭa community advocated the theory of the Viṣṇusvāmī connection, for although the Bhaṭṭas marry the girls of Vallabha-kula, they are not allowed to enjoy their privileges. One Paṇḍit Gaṭṭulālajī, a member of the Bhaṭṭa community, was probably responsible for starting the theory of the spiritual lineage of Vallabha which

> ... was hardly supported by the descendants of Vallabha. Even now, it is only the members of the Bhaṭṭa class who are chiefly taking interest in this theory for obvious reasons. (1935:465)

A final point on this matter is that of a document which first came to the attention of scholars when it was published in a religious magazine in 1927.[26] It was reported that the document in question, which was discovered in the possession of a family of Brahman paṇḍits living in Ujjain, was in Vallabha's own handwriting and revealed that he had visited Ujjain on a pilgrimage in 1490 AD and declared himself to be a follower of Viṣṇusvāmī. An English translation of the text had been made by a Mr. G.R. Wagle of the High Court in Bombay. It reads:

> Vallabhacharyajee the follower of Maryada (i.e. doctrines) of Shrimad Vishnu Swami honours (recognizes) Narottam of Awantika (i.e. Ujeni) as a purohit (i.e. family religious priest): the 1st day of Chaitra Shuddha of Samvat 1546 (22nd March 1490).

If authentic the document would be important for several reasons[27] let alone prove the Viṣṇusvāmī connection. While I was in Ujjain, I had the opportunity to inspect it along with three other Puṣṭimārgis. We visited the Gujar Gaur Brahman paṇḍit in his house in Kartik Cauk where he showed us the fragment of handwriting which had been carefully framed under glass.

> We are paṇḍits and it is our duty to take pilgrims round Ujjain. Our customary work was the same when Vallabhācārya came here. When pilgrims come we take them to the Shipra and recite mantras as they take a bath. Without the mantras and without the paṇḍit a pilgrim cannot achieve the fulfilment of his vow. All religious works performed by the pilgrim in a holy place are done with our help. So when Vallabhācārya came to Ujjain he thought that he must take the advice of a paṇḍit.

I had not the technical competence to judge the authenticity of the handwriting. Nor would irreverent scrutiny have been appropriate in the circumstances since those sectaries who accompanied me had done so with the intention of taking darshan of a sacred relic. Professor Bhatt wrote a further note on the Viṣṇusvāmī-Vallabhācārya connection after hearing of the existence of the same document. According to him, it could have been forged by someone intent on establishing the antiquity of the school of Vallabhācārya, or

> it may be that some of the descendants of Narottama at Ujjain, might have forged this document with a view to enjoying a high status in the society by describing his family as being once honoured by a personality no less than Vallabhāchārya. Unfortunately such cases are not rare in India. (1937:325)

I should perhaps add that the paṇḍits who possess the document also have the signatures of many Mahārājas of the Vallabha sect who have made visits to their home in order to take darshan of this sacred relic.

Mahārājas: Gurus or Gods?

During his judgement in the proceedings of the 'Mahārāja Libel Case' held in Bombay in 1862, Sir Joseph Arnould sought to discover 'In what light are the mahārājas actually regarded by their sectaries?', a question based on the presupposition that the Mahārājas were either regarded as gurus or as gods.[28] An extract from a sectarian text was produced in evidence:

> Whoever holds his spiritual guide and Shrī Ṭhākurjī (or God) to be different and distinct shall be born a Sichana (a kind of bird). We should regard our guru as God, nay as greater than God. For if God gets angry the Gurudev is able to save us from the effect of God's anger, whereas if the guru is displeased nobody is able to save him from the effect of the guru's displeasure... worship of the guru is to be performed in the same way as the worship of God... In this world there are many kinds of creatures. Of them all the most fortunate are we who have sought the protection of the illustrious Vallabhāchāryans, Shrī Gosaijī and their descendants, who are manifestly incarnations of God, the Excellent Being Himself. (From Chatursloki Bhagavat, as translated in History of the Sect of Mahārājas, Muljī, 1865, Appendix, pp. 104-5)

There followed a summary of statements made by witnesses for the plaintiff and for the defence in order to determine whether the Mahārājas are regarded as God, to be worshipped as God, guides to God, manifestations of the head (face ?) of God, of Lord Krishna, of Agni, and the statement made by the Mahārāja plaintiff that Vallabhācārya and Viṭṭhalnāth are regarded as incarnations of God whereas their descendants are regarded as gurus. According to Sir Joseph Arnould, those witnesses called on behalf of the Mahārāja who referred to him as a guru were 'tutored and trained' into giving the evidence expected of them, but on cross-examination 'they were more than once incautiously betrayed into the expression of their feelings and their genuine belief', that is, that they regarded the Mahārāja as an incarnation of God. Several times during the trial devotee-witnesses displayed much hesitancy in applying a clear distinction between God and guru and were sometimes forced into stating an opinion on the threat of a fine or even imprisonment!

I have already described in the Introduction the background to the Mahārāja Libel Case and its damaging effect upon the reputation of the Sampradāya. What is important so far as we are concerned here is the absolute distinction between God and guru presupposed by a British Judiciary (and indeed required for purposes of legal precision) and the misunderstanding that can arise when a distinction of this kind is superimposed on and used to interpret sectarian ideas concerning the relationship between Krishna and the devotee. The issue centres on the difference between Hindu and Christian concepts of divinity, between an ultimate monism and a thorough-going dualism. In terms of the latter, man and God are essentially and qualitively different; the guru as spiritual mentor unequivocally belongs to the category of the human. And yet it seems likely that some of the Puṣṭimārgi witnesses in the Bombay Supreme Court were genuinely confused when forced to clarify their feelings towards the Mahārājas. They can be respected as spiritual teachers and revered as God at one and the same

time. There need be no contradiction here since guru and God are not necessarily conceived as separate beings. In the Pure Non-Dualism of Vallabhācārya there is no abrupt distinction between the Supreme Lord (Shrī Kṛṣṇa Parabrahmana) and the individual human soul (jīva). The soul is a fragment of God, there is no essential difference between the two. The soul contains all of the qualities of the divine though these may be as yet unrealised. The Mahārāja as the bestower of divine grace (puṣṭi) by means of the initiation mantra is supposed to enlighten the soul of its own divinity. The soul thereby becomes filled with grace and fully aware of the true nature of its identity. In this way the Mahārāja as an intermediary between Krishna and the devotee is directly instrumental in awakening this experience of divinity within. At base Krishna, guru and devotee are one and the same.

I shall have more to say about the devotional attitude towards the Mahārāja when I discuss the conceptual status of the divine images of Lord Krishna in the possession of the successors of Vallabha (Chapter V). The spiritual authority of the Mahārājas is closely linked to their custody of particular svarūpas while the Dynasty itself is complemented by the proliferation of svarūpas. For this reason I should stress that the present analysis remains incomplete without reference to the appropriate section in Chapter V. For the moment I should add a few words on the importance of the gurus in their capacity as bestowers of grace.

In discussing the spiritual status of Vallabhācārya as divine intermediary I explained that Lord Krishna cannot extend his favour to human souls without first delegating the capacity of bestowing grace to Vallabhācārya, his own manifestation contrived for that very purpose. This idea allows considerable scope for the enhancement of Vallabha's spiritual standing; as an embodiment and bestower of grace he is more immediate to his devotees in the quest for communion with Krishna than is Krishna. By administering the Brahma-sambandha mantra, his descendants also perform the same function such that there is again much scope for

their spiritual elevation. Just as Lord Krishna manifests his own personality in Vallabhācārya, so Vallabhācārya appears again and again in the form of his descendants who retain the capacity to save souls and who are, in a sense, more immediate to the devotee than is Vallabhācārya. A similar interpretation has been advanced by Wadley in a study of the ordering of gods in Karimpur religion. The deities closest to Brahman, the Supreme God, 'are considered to be related to, but lesser than a superior, often a more remote divine being. In this sense all embodied deities are intermediaries for Brahman' (1973:188-89). The deities closest to Brahman have the broadest scope for power and yet:

> They too are relatively undifferentiated, their traits and characters are loosely defined and their actions correspondingly vague... delegated powers are in some senses more potent than the original ones. A deity with only a few powers is, if ritual patterns are correct, more recognised and in some senses more powerful than a higher level intermediary with many powers... the higher level, more powerful deity is acknowledged, but men first approach, and believe they should approach, the deity specifically concerned with their present trouble. (Ibid., pp. 188-89 and 195-96)

It is in this sense that Vallabhācārya can be regarded as greater than the Supreme Lord Parabrahman who is Lord Krishna, not because he is greater in terms of the amount of power which he wields or that he is the fundamental source of grace, but because as an avatāra of the Supreme Lord he is more directly instrumental in the business of protecting and saving souls. By a similar process of thought his descendants may be held in high esteem because of their relevancy in the business of bestowing grace in the here and now.

But an inverse logic can also apply. The notion that the Mahārājas' spiritual genius is derived can also lend support to a belief in a diminishment or devaluation of their spiritual standing in relation to Vallabhācārya. One can bypass the guru and appeal to a higher divine order, to Vallabhācārya or even Lord Krishna. Some sectarian scholars have argued that if the devotee cannot find a guru worthy of his full respect, then he should devote himself wholeheartedly to his divine svarūp.

Others have developed an interesting compromise which has the advantage of being more acceptable in the aftermath of the Mahārāja Libel Case and in a modern climate of opinion which tends to condemn over-enthusiastic worship of gurus, particularly in the case of gurus who have not distinguished themselves by displaying extraordinary wisdom or piety. The devotee-scholar M.T. Teliwala argued that Vallabhācārya was the only true guru in the sect and that 'all his descendants, however illustrious, have never claimed anything further than being recognized as Gurudwars', or 'doors to the guru'.[29] In his view, initiation is administered by Vallabha through the instrumentality of his descendants who act in the name of, and on behalf of, their predecessor. This idea has also been explained by a prominent Gosvāmī of the sect living in Bombay:

> ... all the commentators have put great emphasis on the conception that Vallabhāchārya is the guru in our sect and we are the door to the guru as Vallabhāchārya is the door to God; so we consider Vallabhāchārya is the sole guru. (Cited in Brent, 1972:192-93)

In this sense the Mahārājas lead to Vallabhācarya but only Vallabhācārya can lead to God. And yet this rationalisation does not reflect a fundamental revision of the sect's attitude towards its gurus, since in another sense it simply serves to reinforce the notion of the absolute indispensability of Mahārājas. If the bestower of the gift can be considered to be greater than the gift, then why should not the one who leads to the gift be considered likewise?

Guru-Worship in Ujjain

I now consider some aspects of guru-worship in practice. It is because of its alleged practical manifestations that guru-worship in the sect has been the focus of so much controversy, the more enthusiastic forms of which have been characterised by Pocock as 'a corrupting veneration more appropriate to images' (1973:144). On the basis of observation in Ujjain, I would suggest that the worship of Mahārājas does in many ways replicate the worship of images, though there are some significant stylistic variations

which require identification. I would also stress that patterns of ritualised exchange between devotees and gurus should not be considered in isolation, rather it is necessary to broaden the field of enquiry to include the complex of criss-crossing transactions occurring between all ritual participants - svarūpas/Vallabha/Mahārājas/devotees - in order to grasp the relative positions assigned to each in the ritual order. The ritual order can then be compared with the conceptual order. In the previous chapter I described the five Puṣṭimārgi temples in Ujjain including the Seventy-Third Seat or Baiṭhak of Vallabhācārya. I shall focus initially on the guru-cult as observed at the Baiṭhak.

Vallabhācārya is not only conceived of as a dinivity, he is also treated as one. Guru-sevā at the Baiṭhak and svarūp-sevā in the temple share the same basic elements. First, those who approach the guru are required to assume a condition of enhanced ritual purity and to take strict precautions to preserve the purity of the guru's immediate surroundings; second, the devotee performs appropriate gestures of salutation and obeisance towards the guru; third, close attention is paid to the guru's comforts (he is bathed, dressed, adorned and serenaded); fourth, the guru is offered various foodstuffs (bhog) and his consecrated remains (prasād) are distributed among worshippers.

At the Baiṭhak a Brahman priest attends the guru (Vallabha's throne) daily and must, like his temple counterparts, first enter a condition of ritual purity (aparas) by bathing and donning pure clothes before entering the inner-sanctum and temple kitchens. Once inside, the priest prepares regular meals and snacks and offers them to the guru as bhog. On entering the inner-sanctum he first prostrates himself before the throne of the guru and touches the guru's footprints (caraṇasparsha). The footprints are bathed every morning in water with tincture of saffron. Afterwards the throne is adorned with necklaces of fresh flower buds (phūlmālās) and a shawl (uparnā). The guru's comforts are sedulously maintained;

his water pot (jhārī) is constantly emptied and refilled, he is fanned during the hot Summer days and kept snug in Winter. As far as I know, solid images of Vallabhācārya are rare. He is said to be ever-present in the form of his throne: a low draped seat which I have sometimes seen surmounted by a red sphere a little larger than one's fist, decorated with radiating silver lines and encircled by a red collar. I understand this to be a representation of Vallabha as a form (rūpa) of Agni born in a fiery hearth.

The doors of the inner sanctum are opened five times a day for those devotees who desire an audience with their guru. These five periods of observation (darshan) correspond to five of the eight periods during which the doors of the svarūp temples are open (see Chapter VI, pp. 194-197) and are as follows:

1. Maṅgalā (7.30 - 8 a.m.): the guru is gently roused from sleep and offered a light breakfast of milk and milk-sweets.
2. Shṛṅgār (9.30 a.m.): his footprints are bathed and his throne adorned.
3. Rājbhog (noon): the guru is offered a full meal after which ārati is performed by waving a lighted lamp before the throne.
4. Utthāpan (4.30 p.m.): he is woken from his afternoon siesta and offered a snack of various fruits.
5. Shayan (7 p.m.): he is given a supper of milk and milk-sweets and put to bed.

Devotees peer into the inner sanctum from an open courtyard. Afterwards they receive prasād of the guru from the priest. On occasions a devotee may decide to sponsor a special ceremony known as padhrāvanī[30] when a moveable Baiṭhak is transported to his or her home and guests are invited to attend for worship.

In order to compare and contrast the worship of the temple svarūp with the worship of Vallabhācārya's Baiṭhak, it will be necessary to refer to temple-sevā as described in Chapter VI, and to the analysis of the

food offering in Chapter VII. For the moment, however, I shall give a brief outline of the three main categories of prepared food distinguished in the sect. This will be of help in understanding food transactions involving Vallabha, Vallabha's descendants and their disciples.

The three main categories of offering prepared in separate temple kitchens and distinguished according to their relative resistance to impurity are:

1. Dūdhghar bhog, including milk, sweets prepared from milk, and fruits. These foods do not contain water or grains and are highly resistant to impurity. Hence they are safely transportable and less likely to become polluted through contact.
2. Ansakharī bhog, including grain, sweet and vegetable preparations most of which are cooked by frying in clarified butter. They are less resistant to impurity than dūdhghar bhog (cf. pakkā foods).
3. Sakharī bhog, including vegetable and grain preparations which are cooked by boiling in water, frying in oil or roasting on a griddle. These foods are highly susceptible to impurity such that strict precautions must be taken to maintain their purity during preparation (cf., kaccā foods).

The first point to note is that restrictions governing the approachability of the guru (Vallabha) in the inner sanctum are less stringent than those governing the approachability of a temple svarūp. For one thing, the chief priest at the Baiṭhak, though a Brahman, does not belong to one of the Brahman jātis that has the exclusive right to perform devotional worship in the inner sanctums of svarūp temples. Restrictions are also relaxed for lay-devotees. Whereas none but the Brahman priests may enter the inner rooms of a svarūp temple, any devotee who is a full initiate of the sect may enter the inner sanctum of the Baiṭhak in order to perform guru-sevā after first taking a ritual bath. He (or she) may

also perform caraṇasparsha of the guru's footprints and empty and refill the guru's drinking water pot (jhārī). He may also prepare dūdhghar bhog for the guru, but not ansakharī or sakharī bhog.

I would suggest that the fact that all devotees are allowed to minister directly to the guru in this manner is an indication of the approachability and accessibility of Vallabhācārya which contrasts with the strict separation maintained between lay-devotee and svarūp in the temple. It would appear that ritual practice reinforces the idea of the conceptual status of Vallabhācārya as an intermediary between Lord Krishna and his devotees (i.e. as a more immediate manifestation of Krishna) for so runs the sectarian maxim:

> It is difficult to approach Lord Krishna directly, but he can easily be realised by performing sevā of the guru.

A second point is that an examination of ritualised transactions in food reveals further differences between the treatment of Vallabhācārya as guru and the svarūp as Krishna. When large feasts are held at the Baiṭhak, the consecrated leavings of Vallabhācārya (dūdhghar and ansakharī prasād) are distributed along with the consecrated leavings of some sacred pictures of Shrī Nāthjī installed alongside the guru's throne. The deities' leavings are of the sakharī category. The reason that devotees do not take the sakharī prasād of Vallabha is that only members of Vallabha-kula are allowed to prepare sakharī bhog and to offer it to the founder. Sakharī, like kaccā food, its familiar north Indian equivalent, is traditionally a medium of social intimacy restricted to members of the same household and the same jāti. In higher jātis, the practice of accepting kaccā (sakharī) food only from one's own family and castemates serves to preserve the purity of the jatī and to emphasise its distinctiveness vis-à-vis other jātis. Similarly the descendants of Vallabha, by reserving the privilege of offering sakharī food to their ancestors, are both preserving the ritual purity of Vallabha-kula and also demonstrating the distinctiveness of Vallabha-kula. What is particularly significant

is that the stress is on the lineage (kula) and not the caste (jāti). Although the members of Vallabha-kula are Tailanga Brahmans, those Tailanga Brahmans who are not members of Vallabha-kula are not allowed to offer sakharī bhog to Vallabhācārya. The circulation of the food of intimacy is restricted to the hereditary-cum-spiritual dynasty.

A third and final point on this subject concerns the circulation of the food remains of svarūp and Vallabha. Occasionally during large feasts at the Baiṭhak, dūdhghar prasād, being highly resistant to impurity and hence safely transportable, is sent from svarūp temples and then offered to Vallabha before being distributed among devotees. The procedure is never reversed. A lay-devotee at the Baiṭhak explained:

> Mahāprabhujī can take the prasād of Ṭhākurjī but Ṭhākurjī cannot take the prasād of Mahāprabhujī. We must offer separate bhog to Ṭhākurjī because he is Bhagavān.

The ritual order and sequence is clear. Prasād is passed asymmetrically from Krishna to Vallabhācārya to devotee but never from Vallabhācārya to Krishna. But I do not think that this spiritual order can be adequately explained in terms of a hierarchy of purity. Man-divine relations are not to be regarded merely as an extension of relationships between castes, nor is the giving and receiving of food to be understood simply in terms of the hierarchical principles governing inter-caste food exchange.[31] Rather prasād is a form of divine grace and as such flows from source (the Supreme Lord, Bhagavān Shrī Kṛṣṇa, manifested in his 'essential form', svarūp, as temple image) to Vallabhācārya (Kṛṣṇa - Avatāra) to devotee (a fragment, ansha, of Bhagavān Shrī Kṛṣṇa). In this sense the ritual order demonstrated by the flow of prasād corresponds to the conceptual order in which the flow of grace follows a principle of descent or derivation-through-manifestation. There is also an interesting parallel with another point noted earlier, viz. the tendency to elevate the status of the guru in relation to Krishna as conceived in the phrase 'the bestower of the gift is even greater than the gift'. In Ujjain the prasād

of Vallabhācārya obtained from the Baiṭhak is often referred to as mahā-prasād, meaning 'great prasād', a term normally reserved for the consecrated remains of a pre-eminent deity, such as Shrī Nāthjī at Nāthdwāra, and rarely if ever used to describe the prasād of a temple svarūp in Ujjain. Just as Vallabhācārya enjoys a special reverence in his role as a bestower of divine grace, so also his prasād, as a tangible manifestation of grace, is held in special esteem by his disciples.

It now remains for us to consider the position and role of the living gurus within this ritual context, particularly with reference to the customary practice of receiving the Mahārājas' leftovers.

No Mahārājas reside permanently in Ujjain although they occasionally stop by for a few days during the course of their tours. The arrival of a Mahārāja is something of a special occasion. He is grandly received and visited by numerous men, women and children who come to take darshan of his person, simply to sit and look on or to ask his advice on spiritual matters. It is at such times that he initiates new members into the sect and consecrates the images and pictures of those devotees who wish to perform sevā in their homes.

Mahārājas are treated in a manner befitting their high spiritual status. This is perhaps best illustrated by a ceremony which substantially replicates a ceremony involving the Baiṭhak of Vallabhācārya. At some stage during his visit, a Mahārāja may favour one of his prominent disciples by accepting an invitation to visit his home. The visit, like that of the 'visit' of the moveable Baiṭhak of Vallabhācārya described above, is also known as padhrāvanī, and follows the same basic pattern. After seating the Mahārāja on a slightly raised throne (gaddī), members of the family and guests make obeisance by placing their foreheads to the floor and touching the guru's right foot with the right hands after which they withdraw and sit cross-legged upon the floor facing him. The revered guest is adorned with flower garlands and fanned; gifts of money are placed

at his feet and he is plied with various sweetmeats prepared from milk (dūdhghar bhog). Ārati is also performed: a lighted lamp consisting of a cotton wick immersed in clarified butter is waved circularly before him.

On these and other occasions, devotees may take the food remains of the guru which is regarded as a kind of prasād. More specifically these consecrated leftovers are referred to by the term adharamṛta, meaning 'nectar (saliva) of the lip'. Adharamṛta is accepted in various situations, particularly at temple feasts when a Mahārāja happens to be present. The sect has been strongly criticised for this custom, the suggestion being that devotees eagerly consume the half-chewed and spat-out remains of the Mahārāja's meals. A few devotees who were aware of such criticisms were understandably reluctant to discuss this subject in detail (e.g. overheard aside 'If he asks about adharamṛta tell him it is our bhāva only and he should not study it too deeply'). Nevertheless, many informants were quite prepared to discuss the subject, including one Gosvāmī.

The procedure is as follows. Bhog is prepared, either by the Mahārāja himself or by his personal attendants,[32] and then offered either to the personal svarūp of the Mahārāja, to a temple svarūp, or to the Baiṭhak of Vallabhācārya. The prasād is then set out on leaf plates (pattals) and the Mahārāja is left in private to eat as much as he desires. After enjoying his meal, all the food remaining is distributed among Vaiṣṇavas as adharamṛta.[33]

What then is the significance of the distribution and receipt of adharamṛta? In ordinary circumstances, a person's food remains are termed jūṭhā and are considered unfit for human consumption save for those occupying a lowly position in the caste hierarchy. In such cases the acceptance of jūṭhā is a demonstration of the marked ritual inferiority of the receiver vis-à-vis the leaver. For example, a low-caste Shudra

servant might consume the leftovers of his high-caste master. According to this rationale, the acceptance of the prasād of the guru could be regarded as a demonstration of the disciple's inferiority vis-à-vis his guru, or an expression of his profound respect for his guru. I would agree that the receipt of adharamṛta is partly an expression of respect and humility on the part of the disciple. But again this is only one aspect of the custom. Adharamṛta, being a form of prasād, also has positive spiritual qualities as a token of divine grace. By consuming adharamṛta, the devotee consumes the favour of Lord Krishna through the mediumship of the guru and is thereby supposed to experience the transcendental bliss of Krishna's līlā. The guru's food remains are regarded as Krishna's prasād and the guru as a manifestation of Krishna. Worldly (laukika) food remains are jūṭhā: spiritual (alaukika) remains are prasād. The two are quite distinct:

> We consider the Mahārāja to be a svarūp (manifestation) of Mahāprabhujī. Mahāprabhujī was born from the mouth of Shrī Krishna and Shrī Svāminījī. Mahārāja Shrī is a descendant of Mahāprabhujī. So adharamṛta is not jūṭhā because it is alaukika. Only laukika things are jūṭhā. (Brahman priest)

> Because Mahāprabhushrī was an avatāra of Agni and because Mahārājas are descended from Viṭṭhalnāthjī and his seven sons, Vaiṣṇavas treat adharamṛta with respect. (Brahman woman)

Taken in its wider context, the ritualised flow of prasād is consistent with the cognitive notion of the derivation of grace through manifestation: from Krishna to Vallabhācārya to his progeny to devotees, a movement which is strictly uni-directional. The Mahārāja derives his divinity from Vallabhācārya as an hereditary-cum spiritual descendant; Vallabhācārya derives his divinity from Lord Krishna as an avatāra, a term which literally means 'descent'.

But there is one notable exception to this pattern. As far as I could tell, all Brahmans in Ujjain refrain from taking the adharamṛta of the living gurus. Those with whom I discussed the subject always emphasised

the point, adding that as Brahmans they were neither obliged nor expected to perform caraṇasparsha of their gurus:

> Adharamṛta is that which is taken by Vaiṣṇavas after the Mahārāja has finished his meal. We do not take it because the Mahārāja considers all Brahmans to be gurus. For this reason if we do daṇḍavat (prostration) he tells us not to. Nor does he want us to perform caraṇasparsha. He says 'Because you do sevā of Ṭhākurjī, I should touch your feet'. (Brahman priest, as above)
>
> Brahmans do not have to perform caraṇasparsha of the Mahārāja. When we meet a Mahārāja we only need do namaskār (greeting with palms together). Mahārājas treat priests with respect. (Brahman woman, as above)
>
> Brahman Vaiṣṇavas do not perform caraṇasparsha of Mahārājshrī; they just do namaskār. If a Mahārāja knows that a man is a Brahman he will stop him doing caraṇasparsha. (Another Brahman priest)

Although Brahman devotees accept the cognitive position that the Mahārājas are manifestations of Vallabhācārya, who is himself an avatāra of Krishna, and although they accept the idea that the Mahārāja's leftovers are prasād and not jūṭhā, they are still not prepared to risk their own high socio-ritual status by touching the feet of another Brahman or by accepting the remains of another Brahman's meals. Brahman devotees may admit that their gurus partake of Krishna's divinity, but their gurus are still nonetheless fellow Brahmans.

Notes to Chapter III

1. The Four Sampradāya are given in chronological order with the probable exception of Rudra Sampradāya which is regarded by many to be the most recent. Nevertheless, there are Vaiṣṇavas, including a large proportion of Puṣṭimārgis, who attribute the highest antiquity to Viṣṇusvāmī for reasons which are made clear later in the Chapter.

2. See Dimock (1966a: 43).

3. See Bhatt (1935:463).

4. From the Svetāsvatara Upanisad in Macnicol (1938, pp.220-221). The passage cited includes the key word bhakti for devotion rendered to God and Guru.

5. See Chapter I, pp.18-20.

6. Like other great Hindu preceptors, Vallabha accepted the testimony of the Vedas, Bhagavad Gītā and Brahma Sutras, but was less than orthodox in attaching equal importance to the Bhāgavata Purāna (see Shah, 1969, pp. 10-11).

7. The Nijvārtā Gharū Vārtā (NGV) is traditionally attributed to Shrī Harirāyjī (1590-1715).

8. The text of the Siddhāntarahasyam has been translated by Barz (1976, pp. 17-18).

9. It is perhaps significant in this respect that the Varkhāri Panth, a Maharashtran bhakti cult centred on the deity of Shrī Viṭṭhalnāthjī at Pandhapur since well before the time of Vallabhācārya, holds an aversion for asceticism and upholds the moderate lifestyle of the householder (Deleury, 1960: 3).

10. NGV (pp. 58f.).

11. Adel is a village at the confluence of the rivers Yamunā and Ganges near Allāhābād where Vallabhācārya settled down to the life of a householder.

12. Vallabhācārya's decision to become a sannyāsi can be seen as being fully in accordance with his own views on renunciation: when the devotee has become so completely immersed in his love for Krishna that he is blissfully unaware of the ordinary laukika world, or if the world threatens to distract him in his devotion to Krishna, only

then may he abandon the world in order to achieve his goal of participation in Krishna's līlā. In this sense sannyāsa is an inevitable result of devotion rather than a means of achieving one's spiritual goal (see Barz, 1976, pp. 32-33).

13. See CVV (pp.476-517); also translated into English by Barz (1976, pp.207-266).

14. By far the most populous House is the First, established by Giridharjī, the eldest son of Viṭṭhalnāthjī. It also has the greatest number of subdivisions. Giridharjī had three sons; the first, Muralīdharjī, died in youth; of the two remaining sons, Damodarjī received the svarūpas of Shrī Nāthjī and Shrī Navnītpriyajī now at Nāthdwāra in Rājasthān, and Gopīnathjī received the svarūp of Mathureshjī established in a temple at Kotā and for a time in recent years at Jātipurā in Braj. Their descendants form two descent groups, each headed by a chief guru. Each group has been further subdivided into six and five sub-lineages respectively (see Mītal, 1968, pp. 69-73).

15. Ibid., p. 69f.

16. Jhaveri gives the literal translation of Tilkāyat as 'rich, possessed of ready money. The correct word is Tilakāyat: one on whose forehead the tilak is put' (Jhaveri, 1928, note 1A accompanying Imperial Farman number VI).

17. The vermilion tilak is similar to that worn by initiates of the other six Houses (see p.102) save for the fact that it is not joined at the bridge of the nose.

18. The Brahman jātis whose members are customarily allowed to perform the intimate services of the deity are Audīchā, Sanchorā and Girinārā.

19. This tradition is explained by Telivala (1928).

20. The titles 'Mahārāja'(lit. 'Great King') and 'Gosvāmī'('Lord of Cows' or 'Controller of the Senses') are applied to adult gurus. Their young children are normally referred to as 'Gosvāmī Bālak'.

21. See NGV (pp. 60-66).

22. See CVV (pp.123 and 133).

23. The information was obtained from a colleague, Alan Entwistle, who is presently engaged in research on the Eighth Gaddī and its literature. He also informs me that the present Mahārāja of this Gaddī claims that

there was in existence a copper plate given by Viṭṭhalnāthjī to Tulsidās authorising Tulsidās and his descendants to initiate disciples by means of the Brahma-sambandha mantra. But the copper plate was lost, probably when the Gaddī was hurriedly transferred from Ḍerā Gāzī Khān (in Pakistan) to Vṛndāvan in Braj at the time of partition.

24. This particular tradition is recorded in CBC (pp.128-131).

25. The passage occurs in Vallabha's commentary on the Bhagavata Purāṇa, known as Subodhinī, where he describes his own kind of bhakti as Nirguṇa (quality-less), Rāmānuja's as Sāttvik, Madhva's as Rājas, and Viṣṇusvāmī's as Tāmas (see Bhatt, 1935:457).

26. In 'Śuddhādvaita and Bhaktimārtāṇda', III.4, p.121 (Ahmedabad, 1927).

27. For one thing, the document is dated and therefore could help in establishing the chronology of Vallabha's life. If it is authentic, and the traditional date for the birth of Vallabhācārya (1479 AD) is correct, then Vallabha visited Ujjain in 1490 when he was only eleven years old! For another thing, the document could prove that Vallabha made a pilgrimage to Ujjain, a likely occurrence given the importance of the place as a tīrtha.

28. As mentioned in Chapter I, a highly critical account of the sect was published in the aftermath of the Mahārāja Libel Case and included specimens of evidence given before the Supreme Court (see Muljī, 1865).

29. Cited in A I R Bombay (1953:159).

30. Padhrāvanī refers to the act of seating an idol or revered person respectfully and with due ceremony.

31. This approach is developed in the last two sections of Chapter VII.

32. Devotees often give donations in cash specifically for tapelī-bhog, a term denoting those foods prepared for the Mahārāja's personal svarūp. His personal attendants who prepare tapelī-bhog are Brahmans belonging to Audīchā or Sanchorā jātis.

33. Informants differed in their descriptions of how the Mahārāja actually takes his food. Some said that he eats it hand to mouth, thereby transmitting some of his saliva to all of the food set before him. Others insisted that he first takes the amount he desires from that presented to him and afterwards proceeds to eat, thus avoiding saliva contact. What really matters, however, is that the Mahārāja enjoys a portion of the food offered, whether the contact is by touch, sight or merely smell.

CHAPTER IV

DEVOTION AND THE DEVOTEE

'Let your worship always be done without desire for receiving anything in return; then I will always remain your debtor'.[1] In these words from the Bhāgavata Purāna, Lord Krishna summarises the spirit of self-dedication required of those who follow the Path of Devotion. The true devotee, devoid of all desires for personal advantage, and urged on by an all-consuming feeling of love, dedicates his thoughts, actions and his whole being to Krishna and thereby endears himself to Krishna. It is not in Krishna's nature to grant fulfilment of desires, but he loves and cares for his unselfish devotees as fervently as they love and care for him. In the Path of Grace such selfless devotees are known as sevaks, being those who perform sevā, or selfless service.

Having presented the overarching structure of the Sampradāya, I now focus specifically on the devotee and the devotional idiom. The concepts sevā and sevak are of profound moral import implying much about the nature of devotional conduct and of the man-divine relationship. The present discussion of these concepts will provide a firm basis for the more detailed analyses to be undertaken in subsequent chapters.

Initiation

Formal entry into the Sampradāya occurs at initiation, a rite which also marks the commencement of communion between the devotee and Krishna. Although initiation is a voluntary act, in the sense that a candidate normally makes a request to a Mahārāja to perform the appropriate ceremony, devotees stress that the candidate is really acting in response to divine will or icchā. Krishna chooses to vouchsafe his grace to some and to

refuse it to others. The Mahārāja is at liberty to refuse a request for initiation, though I heard of no specific incidents of this kind. In other words, those devotees who decide to enter the sect, do so, not as a result of their own free wills, but in response to divine will. The rite is regarded as an emotional and enlightening experience: the devotee passes from a condition of spiritual ignorance to one of blissful realisation of the true nature of his existence as a fragment of the Supreme Lord, Shrī Krishna.

There are two initiation rites, both performed in the presence of a Mahārāja.[2] The first, known as sharana mantropadesha,[3] usually takes place during the candidate's infancy, though aspirants may request to be initiated at any age.[4] After paying homage to the Mahārāja by touching his feet (caranasparsha) in the customary fashion, the candidate positions himself (or herself) cross-legged upon the floor with his guru to his right. He then repeats three times after the guru the eight-syllabled formula Shrī Krsna sharanam mama (Lord Krishna is my refuge), after which he is given a necklace (kanthī) of wooden beads cut from thin stems of the holy basil plant (tulasi). The spiritual effect of this mantra is to place the initiate in a situation of complete dependence on Krishna, thus preparing his soul for communion with Krishna.

The rite is not in itself a complete form of initiation, rather it is regarded as a preliminary step towards full initiation. The second rite, known as Brahma-sambandha, meaning a state of union (sambandha) with Krishna, the Supreme Lord (Brahma), or otherwise known as Ātmanivedana, meaning self-dedication, is a much more serious affair, usually performed by men and women before they are married and as soon as they are considered mature enough to understand its spiritual significance. Having first received the Mahārāja's permission, the devotee fasts for a period of twenty-four hours towards the end of which he takes a ritual bath. Then, standing before an image (svarūp) of Lord Krishna, he (or she) clutches

a tulasi leaf in the palm of the right hand and repeats after the Mahārāja the following Sanskrit mantra:

> Om. The God Krishna is my refuge. Distracted by the infinite pain and torment caused by separation from Krishna, which has extended over a space of time measured by thousands of years, I now, to the holy Krishna, do dedicate my bodily faculties, my life, my soul, and its belongings, with my wife, my house, my children, my whole substance and my own self; I am thy servant. (Trans. Growse, 1883:287).

Having uttered this dedication formula, the new initiate places the tulasi leaf at the foot of the Krishna image and assumes the status of adhikārī, one entitled to follow the Path of Grace as a full member of the sect.[5]

The following autobiographical description of the initiatory experience of a Brahman devotee clearly shows the importance attached to divine grace and divine will as justifications for the act of dedication. In this particular instance the candidate approached the guru as an adult and so was (presumably) considered mature enough to undergo both preliminary and full initiation rites simultaneously.

> Fifteen years ago I went to Indore to meet a friend who was engaged in priestly sevā in the temple of Shrī...Mahārāja. After I had taken darshan my friend introduced me to Mahārāja Shrī. I greeted him in the normal way (namaskār) but I did not touch his feet (caranasparsha). If it is Ṭhākurjī's wish, then he will take you into his protection. Mahārāja Shrī asked me my name and what kind of work I did. I told him that I had studied Sanskrit at Nāthdwāra, Mandasaur, Ujjain and Banaras. We both realised that we had been classmates at Nāthdwāra some twenty-five years earlier. We shared the same guru. Mahārāja Shrī asked me whether or not I had taken Brahma-sambandha. I said 'I am a Brahman, I have my janeū'.[6] But Mahārāja Shrī insisted that it was his wish that I take kaṇṭhī and Brahma-sambandha, so I took both at the same time. No-one else was present except for Mahārāja Shrī, myself and my friend. I stood before Ṭhākurjī and recited the mantra after Mahārāja Shrī. I could understand it because I know Sanskrit; I thought it was very good. Then I received tulasi from Mahārāja Shrī. I had fasted for one day beforehand. You shouldn't take food and water during this time but the gurus have relaxed the rules nowadays. Fruits, water and tea are permitted. When I took dikṣa I asked Mahārāja Shrī 'What do I do now?' He gave me three or four books and I soon knew what to do.

This Sanskrit scholar had travelled widely giving readings and interpretations from Vallabha's commentary on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the Subodhinī,

and was fully conversant with the subtleties of Shuddhādvaita thought and the spiritual significance of the Brahma-sambandha mantra of dedication. My own exposition need only be brief.

According to Vallabhācārya's philosophy of Pure Non-Dualism, all souls (jīvas) are integral parts of Krishna, a relationship analagous to that of sparks issuing from a fire. Because the majority of souls are contaminated by the impurities which prevail in the present degenerate age (Kali Yug), they are ignorant of the true nature of their divine origin and divine attributes, and wrongly imagine themselves to be independent beings capable of owning their own possessions and having full control over their actions. Hence they believe themselves capable of achieving salvation by their own efforts. The only means of redemption open to such hopelessly misguided souls is the grace of Lord Krishna. The Brahma-sambandha mantra, when repeated after a Mahārāja, serves as a medium of divine grace which cleanses the soul of all impurities thereby making it fit for communion with Krishna. By means of this mantra the soul demonstrates its absolute dependence on Lord Krishna.

The essence of the mantra is the complete and unconditional self-sacrifice which is required of the soul. By taking initiation, the devotee dedicates his mind, body and all possessions utterly and irrevocably to Krishna and promises to dedicate all future actions and acquisitions to Krishna before making use of them himself. Krishna will not accept those offerings which have been already enjoyed by the devotee. The implications of the mantra are fully consistent with the form of mental renunciation advocated in the Bhagavad Gītā, whereby the devotee is not required to renounce all worldly actions; instead he renounces the fruits of his actions by dedicating them to god.[7] The sincere devotee performs devotion not as a means to an end, but as both a means (sādhana) and an end (phal, lit. 'fruit') in itself. Such devotion is both an expression of selfless love for Krishna and the delightful experience of loving Krishna. It is in

this light that we can begin to appreciate the nature and significance of dedication in Puṣṭimārga: what is important is the positive act of giving as an expression of self-sacrifice, an act which is ideally devoid of all utilitarian motives and which is in no way to be regarded as a preliminary to a transactional sequence aimed at inducing Krishna to grant material or spiritual favours in return. The ideal offering is an act of pure altruism on the part of the giver.

Having taken initiation (diksa), the initiate is expected to lead a virtuous life as befits a true Vaiṣṇava by observing certain rules of conduct. These are usually explained by the guru at the time of initiation, or else, as is often the case nowadays, the guru gives his new disciple a printed sheet containing a list of ten standard rules in Hindī. They are as follows:

1. You should endeavour to keep your thoughts and your actions (ācār/vicār) absolutely pure (shuddha).
2. You should place absolute trust (param vishvās) in Bhagavān Shrī Krishna.
3. You should always wear your kaṇṭhī and tilak and you should avoid completely all those things which cannot be offered (asamarpit) to God.[8]
4. You should foster right discernment (viveka), spiritual fortitude (dhairya) and sole reliance on Krishna (Kṛṣṇāshraya) throughout your life.[9]
5. You should always keep in mind the Brahma-sambandha and the Eight-Syllabled (aṣṭākṣar) mantra.
6. You should have the greatest regard (bhāva) for your Sampradāya.
7. Your most important duty is to perform the sevā of Shrī Krishna.
8. You should endeavour to help cows, Brahmans and Vaiṣṇavas as much as you can.
9. You should hear and read the holy scriptures, always associating with

righteous souls (satsang).

10. You should consider yourself a servant (dāsa) of Krishna, ever humble and free from all pride.

(These rules are usually followed by a note advising the initiate to send a donation to Shrī Nathjī at Nāthdwāra every year, and to the guru on the occasion of Pavitrā Ekādashī and the guru's birthday.)

After his initiation, the devotee participates in the customary forms of devotional worship prescribed by the Sampradāya (rule 7), all of which are regarded as physical expressions of the spirit of loving self-sacrifice contained in the initiation formula.

Sevā

Three ways of rendering service to Lord Krishna are recommended. The first is tanujā-sevā, or service rendered by means of the body; the second is vittajā-sevā, or service rendered by making offerings of wealth; and the third is mānasik-sevā, or mental service. They correspond to the three-fold dedication of body, wealth and mind contained in the wording of the Brahma-sambandha formula. Of these three, mental service is considered to be the highest form of devotion intended only for the most accomplished devotees. Since those who perform mental service are capable of experiencing the real presence of Krishna in their minds, it is not necessary for them to worship him by preparing material offerings and dedicating them to his visible image. Instead they make offerings mentally in such a manner that ordinary devotees cannot see them.[10] Devotees assured me that such perfect sevaks are rare nowadays; and besides, those who do perform mānasik-sevā usually go unnoticed for they are devoid of all pride and therefore do not openly publicise their spiritual achievements. For the vast majority, tanujā and vittajā sevā are prescribed as the easiest and most practical means of dedication, and, provided they are performed sincerely, will inevitably lead to the accomplishment of mānasik-sevā. They are to be

practised in the initial stages by dedicating one's physical labour and material wealth to the service of Lord Krishna. These two methods receive their most palpable expression in the worship of divine images (svarūpas) installed in sectarian homes and temples.

In this way all acts of devotional worship are designated, both individually and collectively, as sevā while those who perform them are sevaks. The wide range of devotional services performed in the temples of the sect are described in the following chapters; suffice it to say for the moment that the physical form of the worship is typically luxurious. Sevaks are expected to give generously and to work assiduously in ministering to the comforts of the deity.

But as the idea of mānasik-sevā implies, sevā itself is not merely a label denoting specific kinds of devotional activity, for its real essence lies not in performance but in the attitude of the performer. Ideally, and in accordance with the words of the initiation formula, all acts of sevā reflect the sevak's innermost sentiments of disinterested and loving concern for Krishna. Consequently, the devotee who follows meticulously the prescribed rules of devotional worship and yet harbours secret intentions of acquiring rewards is not a true sevak, while his efforts are nothing more than an outward show of sevā. But this idea of sevā is not confined to the sect. It will be useful at this initial stage to consider the more general usage of the concept in secular contexts where it provides an extra moral dimension to a variety of social, political and economic relationships.

In all contexts, sevā generally implies an unequal relationship between the sevak and those persons whom he serves, since the person who regards himself as a sevak must, by definition, consider himself also as the inferior party regardless of any real distinctions of status. This is frequently clarified with reference to a servant-master analogy: the sevak regards himself as a servant (dāsa), and endeavours to demonstrate his humility, respect and unswerving loyalty to those whom he regards as his masters

(mālik). The ideals of sevā are therefore nicely accommodated alongside values of submission and deference normally associated with those persons occupying traditionally inferior status-roles in the sphere of kinship. For example, sevā conveys the ideal spirit of relations between junior and senior kin by reinforcing the cardinal virtues of serving and caring for one's elders, particularly one's father and mother, with an attitude of respectful obedience and out of a sense of loving care. Such conduct is revered in itself as a sacred duty, pleasing to God. As one guru speaking before a large audience in Ujjain put it:

> The man who performs sevā of his father and mother receives the favour (krpā) of Bhagavān. He does not need to worship in temples ... he should serve and obey his parents because they are visible gods. Nowadays men prefer to serve their wives instead of their parents, but this is wrong.

Whereas a man's first loyalties are to his parents, those of a wife are reserved for her husband.[11] The virtuous and devoted wife (satī) is a dominant motif of scriptural and folk tales, the archetype being embodied in the person of Sītā, wife of Rām, who, despite being abducted by the demon king Rāvaṇa, remained pure and faithful until her reconciliation with Rām. Following Sītā's example, the ideal wife lives solely for the happiness of her husband such that all her domestic duties and ritual fasts (pati-vrat) are performed for his spiritual and material well-being. As far as a wife is concerned, wedded bliss is a condition known as saubhāgya, or 'the happy condition of a wife while her husband is alive'. In other words, her own happiness derives wholly from her efforts to contribute to her husband's happiness,[12] an ideal which used to have its ultimate expression in the self-immolation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre.

It is convenient at this point to introduce a further characteristic of sevā being that despite the fact that the true sevak presents himself or herself as an inferior partner desiring and expecting no recompense for his or her sacrifice, the sevak gains an inner spiritual power which far outweighs any worldly position.[13] The sevak may unintentionally gain

power over the gods. Indeed, the devoted wife may become so powerful that even the gods tremble in her presence. The following story describing the origin of a community of ascetics established on the left bank of the river Shipra at Ujjain is of particular interest in this respect:

> Sāti Anusūyā was the wife of a great sage. She served her husband while he practised tapasyā (meditation). She served him in such a devoted manner that she had power (shakti), like Bhagavān. Her fame spread throughout the three heavens: Indra Loka, Vishnu Loka and Shiva Loka. The wives of Indra, Vishnu and Shiva became very jealous of Sātī Anusūyā on account of her pati-sevā and asked their husbands to find out whether or not she was more powerful than themselves. So all three gods disguised themselves as itinerant holy men and visited her home. At the time she was busy serving her husband so she asked them to wait awhile at the door. Later she returned and invited them inside saying 'Now I am ready, how can I serve you?' They explained that they would like to take some food but only if she served them while she was naked. She agreed and sprinkled some water over them so that all three gods became little babies. She suckled them with her own milk and rocked them in a cradle. In this way she cared for them for many days. Meanwhile their wives had become very worried so they decided to visit the home of Sātī Anusūyā. 'Where are our husbands?' they asked her. 'They are sleeping in my house,' she replied, 'Come and see if you can recognise them.' But they couldn't tell one baby from another. 'Please forgive us,' they pleaded, 'we sent our husbands to test you and now we are sorry. Please give us back our husbands.' Sātī Anusūyā then sprinkled some water over the three babies and they became gods again. All three gods then fell at her feet saying 'Please forgive us, we have troubled you very much.' They offered to grant her a boon so she asked them for her own child. Each god gave her a fragment (ansha) from his own body and mixed the three parts together to form a new god. That god is guru Datta Atri. He established the Datta sect. His power was transferred to his successors and since there have been twenty-four gurus.[14]

The story reproduces a dominant theme of Hindu mythology: the distinction between the ascetic-renouncer and the householder-husband. Both roles are apparently irreconcilable and yet both coexist in the god Shiva, 'the erotic ascetic' (O'Flaherty, 1973), as well as producing a constant tension in the varṇa category Brahman (see Das, 1977, chapter 2). The status of Anusūyā's husband is essentially ambiguous for he is both a householder and a celibate ascetic. He is therefore faced with a

dilemma. On the one hand, he can only gain spiritual power, and hence salvation (moksa), by practising meditation, which requires the retention of semen, while on the other hand, he can only perform his duties as a householder, which includes producing progeny, by engaging in sexual intercourse with his wife. The manner of his son's birth serves to resolve the problem since the sage is indirectly responsible for giving birth to a son without breaking his vows of sexual abstinence. The son is both human and divine: he is created from the gods and yet his 'birth' is a result of Sātī Anusūyā's devotion to her husband, the devotion which gives her power over the gods. In asking her to serve them while she is naked, the gods are resorting to trickery. She also is faced with a dilemma, though she does not regard it as such. On the one hand, she should not refuse to perform the sevā of holy men, while on the other hand, to serve them naked would be tantamount to being unfaithful to her husband. Such conduct would also have the effect of destroying the power which she had acquired as a result of her sevā. By changing the gods into babies she is able to serve them while she is naked yet without being unfaithful to her husband.

The story is relevant to our analysis because of the distinction it draws between two kinds of spiritual practice, both having different means and ends. In the first place, the husband performs tapasyā by becoming an ascetic (severing his ties with the world), but his wife performs sevā by concentrating on her wifely duties (within the world). In the second place, the husband desires liberation (moksa) from the cycle of rebirth, whereas the wife desires no more than the opportunity to continue to serve her husband. In the third place, the husband intentionally aims to achieve spiritual power (shakti) through disciplined mental concentration and physical abstinence, whereas his wife unintentionally gains spiritual power through her loving devotion to her husband. We can also add in this respect that the way of asceticism is essentially self-

regarding, whereas the way of sevā is purely altruistic, at least from the point of view of the Puṣṭimārgi sevak.

The ideals of sevā are not restricted to submissive wives and obedient children; they are also adapted to reinforce values of a more equalitarian and universalistic nature. Unselfish service of one's fellow countrymen has been particularly associated with the socio-religious reform movements which arose in India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and found its greatest political exponent in Gandhi. Philanthropic businessmen, social workers and politicians have all used sevā in the sense of 'social service' as their motto, presenting themselves as sevaks utilising their specialised knowledge, wealth and influence for the benefit of less privileged members of society. In a recent article, Mayer (1981) focuses on sevā as public service in the political context of the town of Dewas, no more than an hour's bus journey from Ujjain. He explains that politicians often present themselves as sevaks and class their work as sevā, implying that they serve the public out of a sincere regard for public welfare and unmotivated by desires for personal ends. Consequently, any monetary returns they may receive for their efforts are not classed as a fixed salary earned on a contractual basis, but as remuneration to cover basic living expenses. Once returns are classed as payment, their work ceases to be true sevā. Viewed in these terms the relationship between the politician and the public is unequal, the politician being the inferior party. The public (jantā) is master (mālik). And yet, as Mayer points out, because sevā brings an inner power to the performer, and since a true sevak is likely to be held in a position of esteem among the public, he may in theory become superior to the public whom he serves. Although politicians class themselves as sevaks, they are rarely identified as sevaks by the public. For one thing, the public contrasts the actions of its politicians with those of a true sevak and finds them wanting, and for another, the public does not wish to see its leaders as its spiritual

superiors. Mayer concludes that the idea of true sevā is a cultural construct distinct from actual patterns of behaviour (1981, pp.165f.). It is interesting that Mayer suggests that sevā in the political arena is the ancient ideal of renunciation filled with new content, the renunciation of selfishness rather than renunciation from the external world, for it is by this route that we can now return to bhakti, where sevā as the renunciation of selfishness has found its most coherent expression.

Sevā in Puṣṭimārga

Having considered sevā as a general concept of 'social service', I now move on to its specialised usage within the context of sectarian thought, viz. as selfless devotion to Lord Krishna. However, I should first point out that devotees often combine the two referents of the concept in conversation. In this respect a temple priest who practised traditional Ayurvedic medicine rationalised his work as a doctor treating patients as a form of Krishna sevā:

> My work is my hobby. If I don't complete my medical work in a day I think that I have not done my sevā of Ṭhākurjī. When I practised in the villages, the Vaiṣṇavas of Ujjain used to say to me 'You are a foolish man. You have your own nidhi,[15] and yet you do sevā outside.' But I used to say to them 'If a patient is thirsty and I can revive him by giving him water, then I think that he is sipping from Shrī Nāthjī's cup.' When I began my practice I used to think that I could please Ṭhākurjī by first devoting myself to my patients. By the grace of my guru I enjoy this work very much. I don't say that it is a business because if I regarded my work as a business I could earn crores of rupees. My charges are minimal. I don't need to earn I need to serve, and by the grace of Shrī Nāthjī I have enough.

The relationship between the devotee and Krishna is also conceived with reference to the servant-master analogy. This is the devotional approach known as dāsya-bhāva in which the worshipper is encouraged to assume a devotional attitude of loyalty, humility and awe for the Almighty. The devotee should think of himself as an insignificant servant; he solemnly declares himself as such in the closing words of the initiation formula.

Dāsya-bhāva is an attitudinal orientation ideally suited to the initial demonstration of self-dedication:

> One must dedicate oneself and one's belongings to Shrī Kṛṣṇa just as, in everyday life, a servant puts himself entirely at the service of his employer. (Vallabhācārya, Siddhāntarahasyam, trans. Barz, 1976: 18)

But the analogy only goes so far. There remains a marked distinction between an ordinary servant and a sevak of Krishna. A servant carries out his duties with the expectation of receiving payment from his master, but the sevak neither expects nor demands anything in return. He is an unsalaried servant. The privilege of performing sevā is both his pleasure and his reward.[16]

But this kind of relationship is not the only personal link thought to exist between the devotee and Krishna; others take precedence and are more enthusiastically represented in sectarian rituals and texts. These different attitudes are known as bhāvas or 'emotions' and are as follows:

Sakhya-bhāva. The devotee considers himself as a close companion (sakhā) and playmate of Krishna the cowherd, and imagines that he accompanies Krishna and the other cowherds to the pastures. He therefore experiences the same affections for Krishna as did the young cowherds of Braj.

Madhura-bhāva. Also known as gopī-bhāva, the devotee emulates the sentiments of the milkmaids (gopīs) of Braj who engaged in amorous frolics with Krishna during his nocturnal līlās. This devotional approach is particularly associated with the sect founded by the Bengālī saint, Caitanya. It is also important in Puṣṭimārga.

Vātsalya-bhāva. Puṣṭimārga has developed this emotional attitude more than any of the major bhakti sects. The devotee experiences the tender loving emotions felt by Krishna's foster-parents for their beloved child. In particular the devotee imagines himself to be Mother Yashodā.

Dāsya-bhāva is considered to be appropriate during the early stages

of devotion, serving to impress upon the neophyte the infinite power and majesty (māhātmya) of Krishna. But the servant-master relationship is altogether too impersonal, distant and restrained for the expression of pure loving devotion which requires more intimate, affectionate and unrestrained intercourse between the soul and Krishna. Krishna is not only the sovereign lord of the universe, but he is also, and simultaneously, one's lover, one's friend and one's own child. Despite his inestimable powers, he remains responsive and sensitive to the attentions of his worshippers. Consequently, although sectarian thought clearly distinguishes between different emotional states which determine the roles assumed by devotees when they participate in the divine līlā, it does not imply that these relationships are distinct and mutually exclusive in themselves. Each lays stress on different aspects of the divine personality and different emotional attitudes which co-exist within the devotee as he experiences Krishna's presence. In paying attention to divine majesty, sentiments of awe and humility are automatically engendered in the devotee, and yet these essentially cool emotions must be superseded by more intimate feelings of overwhelming love for Krishna. Awe and humility can ultimately impede the establishment of an intimate relationship between the devotee and his beloved Krishna.

Having experienced dāsya-bhāva, the devotee moves on to explore the other approaches: that of a close friend, a lover, and a parent. He may wish to cultivate one approach more than others. In general, devotees of the sect have laid much stress on the maternal sentiment of devotion, which, for them, represents the purest expression of disinterested loving and caring service, whereas dāsya-bhāva can be seen as the fulfilment of that element of the man-divine relationship which requires humility. The power and majesty of the Supreme, Shrī Krsna Parabrahman, which inspires awe and fear in the hearts of devotees, is thereby contained and concealed in the form of a helpless infant who can only inspire the tenderest loving

affections.

The devotee's love for Krishna grows and grows, a development which is charted by four stages representing four states of mind which gradually increase in emotional intensity. Initially, after taking Brahma-sambandha, the sevak feels an interest or liking (ruci) for Krishna and goes about his daily business feeling no attachment to work or family in accordance with the spirit of self-dedication. Gradually, his interest develops into a deep love (prem) for Krishna until worldly concerns no longer serve to distract him. Such a full absorption in the līlā of Krishna is known as āsakti. This third stage is itself intensified by the alternate experiences of the bliss of union (samyoga) and the extreme grief of separation (viraha) from Krishna as undergone by the gopīs. Finally, by performing sevā and experiencing the alaukika bliss and misery that arises from loving Krishna, the devotee ultimately reaches a state in which he becomes totally addicted to Krishna and his mind becomes totally absorbed in Krishna's līlā. Likewise, Krishna himself falls completely under the control of his devotee. This is the highest fruit of sevā, a condition known as vyasana, when devotee and Krishna enter into a state of ecstatic mutual addiction and dependence on one another's love. Krishna has fully manifested himself within the devotee so that he can experience the indescribable bliss of loving himself.

The abstract nature of this relationship as conceived by the great sectarian philosophers is beyond the scope of this thesis.[17] My own interest in the subject concerns its manifestations in ritual rather than scriptural contexts, in the sevā of the divine images in sectarian temples.

Sevā and Pūjā

I should add a final comment here on the distinctions which devotees draw between their own form of devotional worship, sevā, and worship practised outside the sect, known as pūjā, the more usual term for Hindu worship.

Devotees distinguish between Puṣṭimārga, the Path of Grace, and

Maryādāmārga, the Path of Rules. When they refer to Maryādāmārga, they are indicating those religious disciplines whose methods involve strict observance of traditional social rules and regulations and Vedic injunctions, particularly those associated with the four varṇas, as well as those methods of meditation and abstinence practised by renouncer-ascetics. The difference between the Path of Grace and the Path of Rules relates to the traditional division between the Path of Loving Devotion (bhaktimārga), the Path of Knowledge (jñānamārga) and the Path of Actions (kārmamārga). Whereas Puṣṭimārga is itself a species of bhaktimārga, jñānamārga and kārmamārga are incorporated (by Puṣṭimārgis) within the category of maryādāmārga. Briefly, in jñānamārga, the soul initiates a search for intuition of the Supreme Reality, which is impersonal and subtly abstract, and attempts to realise the nature of this reality within itself. It is essentially an ascetic undertaking. In kārmamārga, more suited to the life of a householder, the worshipper believes that he can fulfil his or her own spiritual and material desires through the propitiation of the gods, thereby persuading them to grant merit as a reward for the performance of certain prescribed rituals, including sacrifices, in accordance with caste duties and customs. Devotees of Puṣṭimārga, along with those who prefer the Path of Loving Devotion, generally place little value on the efficacy of knowledge or actions and consider such approaches to be limited because of their reliance on self-effort, since inevitably, salvation, whether conceived as liberation, mokṣa, or, in the case of Puṣṭimārga, as close communion with a personal god, is only attainable through an act of divine grace. It follows that firm trust in the grace of god, which is dependent upon the independent will of god, will contradict beliefs in the efficacy of self-effort, the latter being essentially selfish showing little concern for the well-being of god except insofar as a god plied with offerings will be a propitious god.

Moreover, the Path of Rules is directly opposed to the Path of Grace

in the sense that love for Krishna knows no bounds. It would be insincere of the devotee to demonstrate his love mechanically by following prescribed methods. On the contrary, loving devotion is spontaneous, poetic, irrational and unhindered by ritual minutiae and sedate philsophical contemplation, like that of the adulterous gopīs of Braj, who paid no heed to social convention and left their worldly husbands in order to sport with their divine lover. Devotees are encouraged to observe worldly rules and customs, but only insofar as they do not impede their devotion to Krishna. If, however, preoccupation with worldly duties should become an obstacle to devotion, then the world must be transcended. It is in this light that we shall later examine transactions with the deity in the sect, particularly as they relate to the pure-impure idiom, for ultimately too nice an attention to purity is likely to obstruct one's devotion, serving to maintain a distance between devotee and Krishna which loving devotion seeks to traverse.

The distinction between Pustimārga and Maryādāmārga is consistent with the sectarian distinction between sevā and pūjā. Pūjā is the common word in Hindī for an act, or acts, of worship. Members of the sect, however, prefer to reserve the word pūjā for those forms of worship performed in Maryādāmārga; they would consider it most inappropriate as a synonym for sevā. Pūjā is bound by formal rules and regulations whereas sevā is the spontaneous outflowing of love for Krishna which transcends all concern for proper ceremony. Pūjā makes use of conventional and mechanical formulae (mantras) which are normally repeated without understanding of their true meaning: sevā dispenses with such empty forms. In pūjā means and ends are not distinguished, it is often performed with the intention of gaining divine favours: sevā is both a means and an end, the blissful experience of loving Krishna selflessly is its own reward. Pūjā often requires the presence of priestly intermediaries (pujārīs) who are specialists in ritual techniques. All devotees are qualified to participate in sevā; there are

no pujārīs, only accomplished sevaks. From the Puṣṭimārgi's point of view, pūjā, with its elaborate rules, mantras and priestly hierarchy is likely to degenerate into mere ritualism. The distinction was summed up succinctly by a Mahārāja:

> In pūjā method (vidhi) and self-happiness (svasukha) are considered most important, but in sevā love (sneha) and Bhagavān's happiness come first. Bhagavān's happiness is our happiness and this is alaukika.

But note that we are discussing real sevā, performed altruistically and with absolute sincerity. And yet a principal theme of sectarian debate arises from a general consensus among devotees that real sevaks are such a rare or invisible breed these days. A similar attitude was noted by Mayer in the secular context of Dewas politics (1981). In Puṣṭimārga the sevā idiom is central and the basis of a very real dilemma that has a colouring relating specifically to the sect. Puṣṭimārga has advocated the life of the householder for all of its followers perhaps more earnestly than any other of the major bhakti sects, while, in so doing, it has expressed its suspicions of renunciation as being a potential cause of spiritual arrogance and worldly temptation. Consequently, Puṣṭimārga requires its followers not to renounce the world and worldly actions but to renounce the fruits of one's actions in the world through the performance of sevā or 'selfless action' by dedicating all to Lord Krishna. Consistent with this principle has been the tendency for temple worship to become increasingly extravagant: hard work and generous giving are expressions of such dedication. But here is the rub, for the very act of performing the actions of sevā in a temple context inevitably brings merit to the sevak in the form of public recognition. Manasik or mental sevā would help to resolve this dilemma but for the fact that sevaks who practise manasik-sevā are normally considered to be so rare as to be non-existent. Perhaps this all goes to prove that the act of giving without giving up required of the puṣṭi bhakta is the easiest and yet the most difficult path to salvation.

I shall return to this debate as it appears in the everyday life of the temple in the penultimate chapter (IX). But for the moment I shall concentrate on the temple as the arena where the sevak assumes his various roles vis-à-vis Lord Krishna and where sevā manifests itself in action.

Notes to Chapter IV

1. See Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X,31: 1-9; the English translation is in Vyasa (1952, vol. IV, p.129).

2. Since no Mahārājas live in Ujjain, devotees either ask to be initiated into the sect while visiting sectarian shrines where Mahārājas reside, or they wait for a Mahārāja to visit the city.

3. The rite is more usually referred to as nām lenā ('to take the Name' - of Krishna) or kaṇṭhī lenā ('to take the kaṇṭhī' - the tulasi necklace worn by all devotees after their initiation).

4. Because the majority of aspirants already belong to sectarian families, it is customary for parents to ask for their children to be initiated at an early age, sometimes even before they are able to talk! Wives whose husbands are initiates are encouraged to take initiation soon after their marriage. Alternatively, I know of several 'husbands' who became initiates after marrying Puṣṭimārgi wives.

5. Originally there was only one initiatory rite. Presumably, the two separate rites were introduced as a way of securing the admission of members' children into the sect.

6. The janeū is the sacred thread normally worn by Brahmans and members of other twice-born castes after undergoing a rite of investiture at about the time of puberty.

7. I am reminded here of a terse comment by Underhill on the Christian idea of sacrifice: 'For sacrifice is a positive act. Its essence is something given; not something given up' (Underhill, 1962).

8. 'Those things which cannot be offered to God' include all non-vegetarian foods, alcohol, onions, garlic, etc. (see Chapter VII). It is a general belief among Puṣṭimārgis that if one's kaṇṭhī breaks, which is not an uncommon occurrence since the cotton thread on which the tulasi beads are strung tends to be rather weak, then one should avoid taking food and water until a new kaṇṭhī is placed around the neck.

9. This rule derives from the first verse of Vallabha's Viveka-Dhairyāshraya-nirūpaṇam, the eighth book of the Ṣoḍashagrantha, the 'Sixteen Books' (see Barz, 1976: 63 for a translation of this particular verse).

10. One such accomplished sevak was King Āshakaran whose story is told in

DBVV (pp. 139-156). The third episode of this Vārtā tells of an occasion when Rājā Āshakaran's kingdom was invaded by a southern King. As the two armies stood face-to-face on the battlefield, it began to rain. Āshakaran's army was soaked by the rain, but the enemy was miraculously slain outright by great hailstones. After his victory, Āshakaran became aloof and began to perform mānasik-sevā while still on horseback. Mentally, he prepared some curry in a small earthen pot as an offering to Lord Krishna. But as he was doing so his horse started, the pot slipped from his hands and 'real' curry spilled all over him. His minister, seeing that Āshakaran's clothes were soaked in curry, was very puzzled and enquired as to the cause of this occurrence. But Rājā Āshakaran kept the accomplishment he had acquired through the grace of Shrī Gusainjī a secret (DBVV, p.146).

11. Selfless service of one's husband is known as pati-sevā.

12. Devotees often used the analogy of the dedicated wife (saubhāginī) to explain the nature of their relationship to Krishna, viz. the devotee derives joy through his efforts to contribute to Krishna's happiness. See also Chapter VII, p. 253-254.

13. This and other aspects of sevā (only in a secular context) have been discussed in some detail by Mayer (1981, pp.161f.).

14. This story was related to me by a devotee of Puṣṭimārga. Another version has been translated from the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa by O'Flaherty (1975,pp.53-55).

15. The term nidhi refers to a Krishna svarūp, but see Chapter V,pp.177f.

16. The distinction between paid and unpaid servant is expressed in several ways. An unpaid servant is referred to as amolik dāsa or bina mol kā dāsa and a paid servant as molik dāsa. Another way of distinguishing is laukika dāsa, which implies an ordinary servant, and alaukika dāsa, a servant who devotes himself to his master (the divine) out of a sense of pure selfless love.

17. See, for example, Barz (1976, pp. 80-93) who gives an excellent summary of the soul-divine relationship as conceived in Puṣṭimārgi literature.

CHAPTER V

IN NAND BĀBĀ'S HOUSE:
THE PUṢṬIMĀRGI TEMPLE AS THE ABODE OF LORD KRISHNA

Before going on to a description and analysis of routine temple worship, we should first familiarise ourselves with the temple environment. The emphasis here is not on the physical structure and layout of the temple per se, but on the temple as conceived with reference to a corresponding cosmographical order. The image which stands in the inner sanctum is credited with an intrinsic vitality and personality befitting an actual manifestation (svarūp) of the child Krishna, the very same god who revealed himself to the cowherds and cowherdesses of Braj through the performance of his divine play or līlā. The temple itself represents the stage of līlā, being the foster-home of Krishna in the celestial world of Braj, otherwise known as Goloka.[1] The performance of the many and varied activities of sevā is therefore meaningful inasmuch as devotees identify the svarūp as Lord Krishna, the setting as Krishna's heaven, and themselves as actual participants in Krishna's līlā, the gopīs and gopas of Braj. We shall see that the location of the temple within a grand design is closely related to the symbolic form and content of devotional rituals and the formal organisation of the institution. The conduct and physical movements of worshippers must be appropriately oriented within a context of cosmographical proportions.

The temple therefore provides the stage upon which devotees act out their roles as participants in the divine drama. In this chapter I give an exegesis of the relevant concepts and ritual acts which articulate the moral and structural correspondences between the heavenly and worldly domains. Of particular significance in linking the two is the darshan

when the doors of the inner sanctum are opened and the deity revealed to his assembled admirers. It will become clear in subsequent chapters that the darshan is the central occasion of temple life, the reason for temple attendance and the main objective of all ritual and administrative acts. Moreover, the darshan is considered to be spiritually edifying, providing a brief but intense experience of divine bliss. In the final section I consider the nature of the temple image in an attempt to understand what devotees mean when they describe and treat the svarūp as an actual living manifestation of the child Krishna. I shall begin, however, with the establishment of the first svarūp temple for it is this structure that is regarded by sectaries as the prototype from which all sect-managed temples are derived.

The Establishment and Proliferation of Temples

Of all the Krishna images worshipped in the Sampradāya, that of Shrī Govardhan Nāthjī, usually abbreviated to Shrī Nāthjī, now installed in a temple at Nāthdwāra in Rājasthān, is held in the highest esteem chiefly on account of its miraculous origin and its renown as the first svarūp to be worshipped by Vallabhācārya. The image is of finely polished black stone and depicts a standing figure with its eyes turned inwards towards the bridge of its nose as if in deep meditation. The most distinctive feature of the image is its posture: the right fist is clenched tightly and rests on the hip, the left arm is bent and raised above the head as if casually supporting some burden on the palm of the hand. The meaning of this stance is well known to Vaiṣṇavas as that of the child Krishna holding aloft Mount Govardhan in order to shelter the gopas and gopīs of Braj from a violent rainstorm sent by the god Indra and intended as a punishment for their neglect of his worship. By withholding tribute to Indra and seeking the refuge of Krishna, the inhabitants of Braj received the latter's full protection, while the power of Indra was rendered impotent throughout the land.[2] The myth which occurs in the Bhāvagata Purāṇa was evidently

current for several centuries before the birth of Vallabhācārya (Vaudeville, 1980, pp. 4f.). But it was left to Vallabhācārya to identify an image of black stone that emerged from the ground near the summit of Govardhan Hill in the fifteenth century AD as a second epiphany of Lord Krishna as Indradaman, the 'Subduer of Indra'. The appearance of the image and the nature of its discovery are recorded in a popular sectarian chronicle entitled Shrī Nāthjī Kī Prākaṭya Vārtā (SNPV), 'The Account of the Manifestation of Shrī Nāthjī' attributed to Shrī Harirāyjī, details of which are summarised below.[3]

At sunrise on the third day of the Dark Half of the month of Shrāvaṇ (July-August) in 1409 AD, a raised arm of black stone suddenly emerged out of the ground on Govardhan Mountain in Braj. Some days later on Nāg-Pañcamī, the day on which snakes are worshipped, a local cowherd discovered the image and told his friends. They were bewildered as to the precise nature of its divine identity. But an old Brajvāsī suggested that the arm belonged to Shrī Krishna who had once held up the mountain to shelter the Brajvāsīs from the storm sent by Indra and that Lord Krishna himself was probably standing in a cave beneath the mountain. He advised them not to excavate since Lord Krishna would emerge in his own time. Meanwhile, they bathed the arm in milk and worshipped it by applying sandalwood paste and offering flowers and tulasi leaves. Thereafter, a festival was held every year on Nāg-Pañcamī in honour of the Risen Arm.[4]

Sixty-nine years later at midnight during the Dark Half of the month of Vaishākh (April-May), a face also appeared along with the arm, while at the same moment Vallabha was born in an Agni-Kuṇḍ.[5] In the village of Anyor at the foot of the mountain lived two cowherds named Māṇikcand and Saddūpānde who unknowingly owned a cow that happened to be a descendant of one of the herd originally kept by Krishna's foster-father, Nand Bābā. This cow used to stray from the herd in order to empty the contents of her udders into the mouth of the image. Perhaps thinking that a thief was stealing

the milk, the two cowherds followed the cow and witnessed the miracle. Saddūpānde was immediately blessed with darshan of the image as a manifestation of Lord Krishna. After revealing its identity, the image ordered him to send milk from that same cow twice daily.[6]

Later a Bengālī Vaiṣṇava saint called Mādhavānanda visited the image during a pilgrimage to Braj and resolved to prepare cooked food for the deity. But Shrī Nāthjī refused to accept it saying that he would not take cooked food from anyone until Vallabhācārya himself came to Braj and offered it to him. In 1492 in the month of Phālgun (February-March), Shrī Nāthjī appeared to Vallabha in a dream as he was travelling in central India and ordered the ācārya to go to Braj in order to reveal his, the deity's, true identity and to establish the sevā. Vallabha arrived and duly inaugurated the sevā by offering Shrī Nāthjī a meal of rice boiled in milk.[7]

Soon afterwards, Vallabhācārya had a small shelter erected over the deity and appointed one Rāmdās as its priest with the responsibility of bathing, adorning and feeding the image. It would appear that as the fame of Shrī Nāthjī spread throughout the region of Braj, the popularity of the small temple grew out of all proportion to its size such that a more substantial structure was soon required. The SNPV goes on to say that in samvat 1556 (1499 AD) a wealthy merchant named Pūrṇamal (or Pūranamal) Kṣattrī was instructed by Shrī Nāthjī in a dream to build a large temple on the same site.[8] An architect was called from Agra to prepare plans for the new temple. The architect proposed an imposing structure dominated by a tall shikhara in keeping with the traditional Hindu temple style. But Vallabha rejected the plan and informed the architect that he desired a solid building reminiscent of the dwelling of Krishna's foster-father, King Nand. The architect drew up his plans a second time and again made allowance for the construction of a shikhara which Vallabha subsequently rejected. But when the architect included a shikhara in his third attempt, Vallabha realised that it was Shrī Nāthjī's wish that a shikhara be

incorporated within the temple.[9]

No sooner had the foundations been laid than Pūrṇamal ran out of money and was forced to postpone the project. According to the interpretation in the CVV (pp. 153-54), he had originally intended to draw upon his father's wealth but was prohibited from doing so since only that money earned and offered by divinely oriented souls - the followers of Puṣṭimārga - is permissible in sevā. Pūrṇamal's father was not a sevak of Vallabhācārya and therefore had not earned his money with the sole intention of dedicating it to the service of Lord Krishna. Instead, Pūrṇamal was obliged to work hard as a merchant until he had made enough money to resume construction work. After a delay of several years the temple was finally completed in 1520 AD.

With the new temple came an increase in the number of devotees and ritual functionaries, which in turn called for an efficient system of organisation and supervision. Vallabhācārya ordered Saddūpāṇḍe to perform the intimate services of the deity as a chief priest, but Saddūpāṇḍe reluctantly admitted that although he was a Brahman he had little experience in such matters and suggested that his guru might do better to invite some Bengālī Brahmans who were disciples of the Bengālī saint Caitanya to act as priests. The Bengālī Brahmans were duly installed as priests giving rise to a situation that was later to prove an embarrassment to the sevaks loyal to Vallabhācārya. In addition, a Shudra named Kṛṣṇadās, respected both for his administrative abilities and for his talents as a composer and singer of devotional songs, was appointed as temple manager.[10] Later, Vallabhācārya's younger son, Viṭṭhalnāthjī, devised a more systematic and elaborate form of temple sevā which involved an increase in the food offerings and an enhancement of the magnificence of the shṛngār (the adornment of the image). It was during Viṭṭhalnāthjī's leadership that Kṛṣṇadās forcibly expelled the Bengālī Brahmans from the temple and replaced them with Brahman disciples of the sect.[11]

During the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries, the temple prospered with no significant antagonism from the Muslim regime centred on Delhi. Indeed, one legend recalls that the Mughal Emperor Akbar was so impressed by the tenets of the Puṣṭimārgi faith that he visited the temple at Govardhan Hill, and, although being a non-Hindu and therefore prohibited from entering inside, was permitted to observe the deity through a window set in an outer wall. But after the accession of Aurangzeb in AD 1658, and out of fear for the Emperor's iconoclastic tendencies, devotees transported the svarūp to Rājasthān and settled in a remote village in the mountains of Mewar, near Udaipur, known since as Nāthdwāra ('the door (dvāra) of the god (nāth)'). Thanks to the generous support of the Rājput rulers of Mewar, the new temple received large endowments of land in jagir and the rights to employ all rents and produce therefrom for the upkeep of the temple and the sevā of Shrī Nāthjī. All goods entering the town were exempt from duty and offerings poured in from the villages of Mewar. James Tod, who visited Nāthdwāra in the early years of the nineteenth century, reported that foodstuffs and rare spices were carried there from as far afield as Persia, Arabia and the islands of the Indian archipelago. The gurus deputed comptrollers in the seaports of Surat and Cambay to collect benefactions and to send them on to Nāthdwāra (Tod, 1914:420). The temple at Nāthdwāra is today the richest and most popular place of worship in the sect whereas the original temple on Govardhan Hill has long since fallen into ruins and awaits the return of the exiled deity at some time in the future.

Vallabha temples are widely distributed in India, though the vast majority are to be found in northern and western regions, particularly in the urban centres of Gujarāt, Malwa, Uttar Pradesh and Bombay. As mentioned earlier (Chapter II), the proliferation and spread of temples owes much to the support received from the GujarātI merchant castes who donated much wealth and property both in their original homelands and in

the places in which they settled during their migrations. Viṭṭhalnāthjī, who himself made several successful fund-raising tours of Gujarāt, had made provisions which were to shape the future organisation of the sect by handing full spiritual and secular authority to his seven sons. Each son retained the right to initiate devotees by means of the Brahma-sambandha mantra, and each received a divine svarūp of Krishna, the prestigious svarūp of Shrī Nāthjī along with the temple going to the eldest; the others established their own svarūp temples in different areas of northern India. These seven sons founded Seven Houses or Seven Seats and their respective male descendants have assumed the title of Mahārāja and the exclusive authority to initiate devotees, while the leadership of each House and the rights to worship the original svarūp have been inherited by a principle of primogeniture. Over the centuries wealthy sevaks have dedicated numerous temples to the Mahārājas, such that the vast majority of sectarian temples are affiliated to the Seven Houses and under the controlling authority of the Mahārājas, who appoint priests and managers to maintain temples in their absence as is the case with four of the five sectarian temples in Ujjain.

The House of Nand Bābā

Initiates of Vallabhācārya Sampradāya stress that strictly speaking the word mandir, the normal word for 'temple' in north India, is inappropriate when applied to their own places of worship; instead they prefer the word havelī, meaning a large house or mansion. Viewed from the outside many havelīs are deceptively inconspicuous as temples; architectural embellishments such as typify the Hindu temple style - relief sculptures, cupolas and towers - are absent. Visitors enter through unpretentious doorways which are sometimes flanked by painted elephants. Judging by the grand and extravagant character of worship inside the havelī, it would be wrong to assume that its plain facade reflected an inner spirit of puritanical austerity. Rather, in conformity with Vallabhācārya's own vision, the temple is meant to resemble a large house. It is Nandālaya

'the abode of Nand', foster-father to Krishna and ruler of the cowherds of Braj. The temple is the permanent home of the infant Krishna. Ideally, all activities performed within conform to the domestic routine of King Nanda's house and it is for this reason that modern domestic methods and implements are eschewed. The temple of Shrī Nāthjī at Nāthdwāra is highly stylised in its duplication; even the tiled roof is said to be characteristic of old-style Braj dwellings.

A further explanation given for the plain appearance of the haveliīs is that the early structures were designed with the intention of concealing their true function from Muslim iconoclasts, or at least of not inciting the ruler's wrath by defiantly flaunting their faith in the form of 'idolatrous' reliefs and towering shikharas. During the reign of Aurangzeb Vallabha temples proliferated, even though the emperor figures prominently in sectarian tradition as a vehement destroyer of Hindu temples. That the threat of Aurangzeb was thought to be very real by the early disciples is evidenced by their decision to flee from Braj and to settle their deity in Mewar where the Rājput kings were sympathetic to their cult.

In a cosmographical sense, the haveli marks the threshold between two contrasting worlds (loka), outside is the ordinary, mundane (laukika) world populated by souls which are spiritually ignorant, whereas inside is the sacred (alaukika) other-world where Krishna performs his eternal līlā, a refuge for divine souls (daivi jīva) enlightened by the grace of Lord Krishna. At Nāthdwāra, the alaukika domain is extended to the whole town, which is described as the door (dvara) between the laukika and the alaukika (loka ka alaukika dvara). Not only has the svarūp of Shrī Nāthjī been transported there, but also the entire sacred geography of Braj. The local stream is identified with the river Yamunā, a nearby mountain with Govardhan Mountain, and a garden with the sacred grove known as Nikunj where Krishna and Rādhā meet at night and in secret. These two contrasting worlds are not only conceived spatially, but they are also essentially

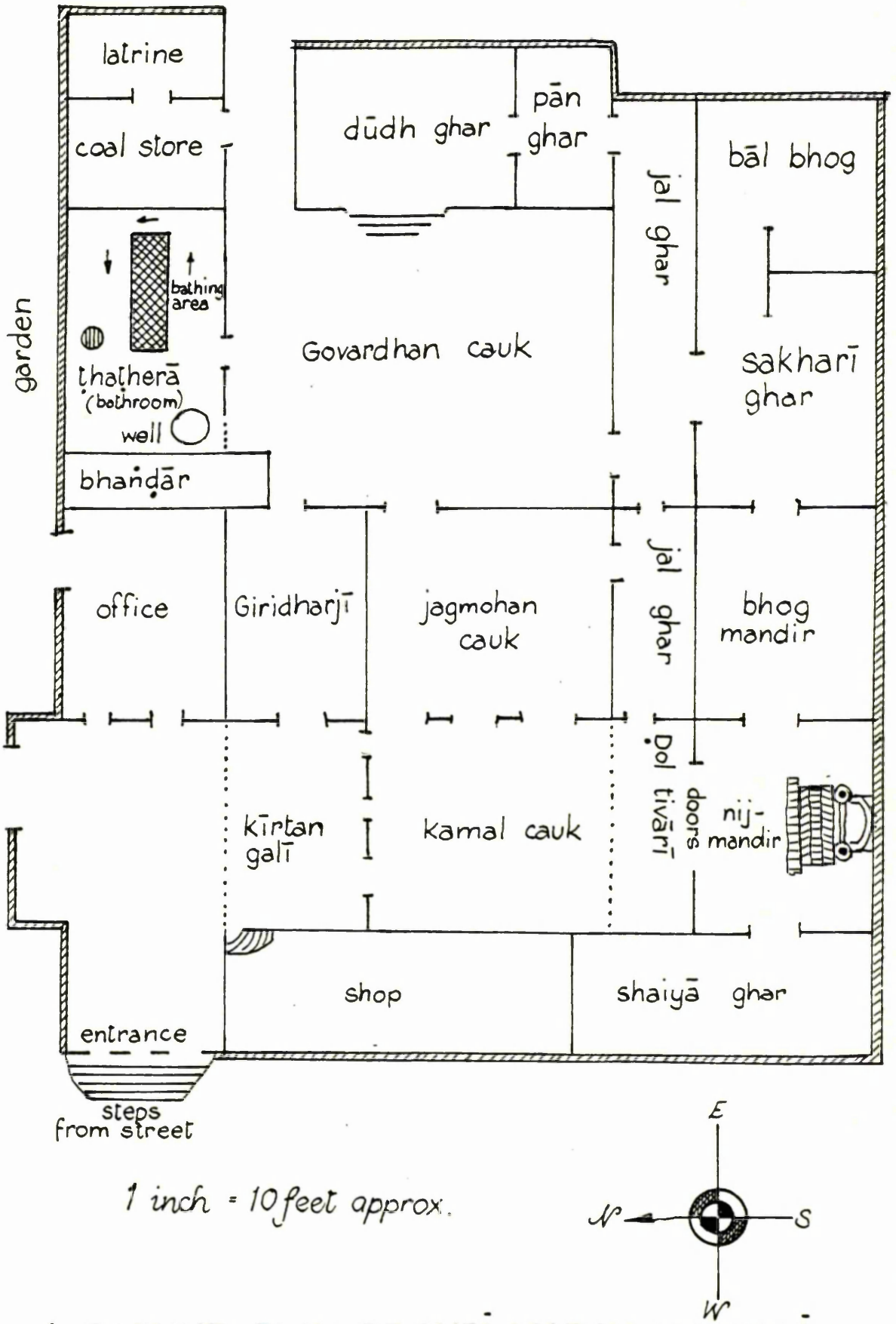
co-extensive. Perception of the celestial land being dependent upon the capacity of the individual to experience the pure emotions (bhāva) which raise the soul above and beyond the physical world. In the same way, only enlightened souls really know the havelī to be the actual home of Krishna. For others, it is an insignificant building; whenever they venture inside, they are only capable of observing the physical form of the sevā and of participating in the same way that they would normally worship in non-sectarian temples, namely by reciting mantras and performing automatic gestures of worship. They are unable to experience the true alaukika form of the sevā, nor do they realise that the episodes performed within the inner sanctum are not simply rehearsals or recreations, but actual embodiments of divine līlā. The inconspicuous exterior of the havelī is unlikely to attract such unenlightened visitors; it stands as a reminder of the sect's customary reticence in disclosing the secrets of the Path of Grace to those who are unable to grasp its alaukika meanings.

It should be mentioned in passing that preference for the term havelī has a significant contemporary relevance. This concerns the legal definition of the havelī and its implications concerning rights held over the building and its contents. The legal controversy is mentioned in a later chapter (Chapter VIII) and mainly concerns those havelīs under the supervision of the descendants of Vallabhācārya. Briefly, the Mahārājas, together with those disciples who support them in the matter, claim that the temples under their jurisdiction are not public places of worship, but their own private (nij) houses, all rights over which, and benefits which accrue from which, belong exclusively to them. Similarly, the deities are not public deities but private domestic deities. They point out that devotional worship performed in their temples has always been classed as domestic worship, ghar-sevā or gṛha-sevā, that the sevā of the deity is performed by themselves and their families and/or by priests specifically appointed by them to perform the sevā on their own behalf. The rights which they

claim amount to control over the temples as though they were privately owned houses: devotees are allowed to enter the haveli only after receiving the guru's permission; they may offer donations in cash and kind only with the guru's consent; all priests and temple functionaries are appointed and removed by the guru's will; offerings become the property of the guru to be disposed of according to his own wishes, while some Mahārājas have even claimed that they may close the havelīs to the laity and remove the deity if they think fit to do so. These strong claims have largely arisen in reaction to what Mahārājas and many devotees see as an excessive intrusion of secular politics into the domain of the Sampradāya. In recent years the more palatial havelīs have become increasingly subject to government scrutiny. Income Tax raids are frequent, while judicial pronouncements on individual temples have tended to declare havelīs as public temples and the deities as public deities. But these controversies will be discussed more fully in Chapter VIII.

The largest Puṣṭimārgi havelīs such as I have seen at Nāthdwāra, Jatīpurā and Kānkarolī are palatial dwellings surrounded by high walls with their deities installed in small shrines just off the innermost courtyards. The havelīs in Ujjain are much smaller in scale resembling large houses constructed in the traditional style around secluded courtyards. Nevertheless, both large and small havelīs tend to approximate to a standard design in terms of which the various rooms and quadrangles are identified with the sacred geography of Krishna's līlā. The haveli contains Braj-bhūmi, the celestial Braj. It will be useful at this stage to present a brief description of the layout and cosmography of the Puṣṭimārgi temple by referring to the scale plan of Temple B given on page 160. Shrī Madan Mohanjī kī Havelī is the smallest of its kind in Ujjain, and yet it still exhibits many of the standard features of the traditional Puṣṭimārgi temple.

Ascending by a few steps from the street, devotees leave their shoes just inside the main entrance. Near to the entrance there is a small office



1 inch = 10 feet approx.

4- GROUND PLAN OF SHRĪ MADAN MOHANJĪ KĪ HAVELĪ, UJJAIN

where the munīm receives donations from worshippers as they come and go. A slight step upwards marks the beginnings of Kīrtan Galī. This area is utilised principally for satsang - those occasions when devotees assemble to listen to lectures and readings from the Vārtās, or to take part in the singing of devotional songs. From here, worshippers can observe the deity whenever he grants an audience. But most worshippers prefer a closer vantage point for which they pass through an arched screen while at the same time stepping down into Kamal Cauk (kamal = lotus). On the floor in the centre of the cauk there is an inlaid design of a twenty-four petalled lotus which stands for Braj-maṇḍal or Braj-bhūmi, the petals representing the twenty-four sacred groves (vanas) of that region (cf. Vaudeville, 1976:197). The cauk is also identified with the sacred Yamunā. It is flooded during the annual festival of Nāv-līlā when Lord Krishna sports in a boat on the river (see Chapter VI, pp.204-205).

Kamal Cauk is surrounded by triple-arched galleries or tivārīs. Just beyond Ḍol Tivārī, so called because it is the place where Ṭhākurjī is pushed in a swing (ḍol) on the day after Holī (Chapter VI, p. 199), are the doors of the nijmandir opening into Ṭhākurjī's throne room. No devotees may trespass in the space between Ḍol Tivārī and the nijmandir.

To the right of the nijmandir (i.e. on the deity's left) and hidden from view is the Sleeping Apartment (Shaiyā Ghar). This room is identified with Nikunj, the sacred grove in Vṛndāvan where Krishna danced with the milkmaids. To the left of the nijmandir is the Dining Room (Bhog Mandir) where the food offerings are kept. Beyond Bhog Mandir are the various internal kitchens including Sakharī Ghar, Bāl Bhog, Dūdhghar, Phūl Ghar, Pān Ghar and Jal Ghar, each corresponding to the different kitchens of Nand Bābā's mansion.

An open courtyard situated towards the rear of the temple is known as Govardhan Cauk after the mountain of that name. A room leading from this cauk contains a small shrine devoted to Girirāj (King among Mountains)

as an essential form (svarūp) of Lord Krishna.[12] Another room contains the well and a bathing area; here the priest performs his ritual ablutions before entering the temple kitchens. His living quarters are situated towards the rear of the temple behind Dūdh Ghar. Finally, an upper storey forms a gallery overlooking Kamal Cauk on three sides, while the fourth side, situated immediately above Kīrtan Galī, contains the private apartments of the Mahārāja.

The Darshan

Devotees visit the havelī in order to have darshan of the svarūp of Lord Krishna.[13] Regular daily attendance is ideally encouraged on the grounds that the lovesick soul cannot endure the agony of separation from Krishna for longer than one day. From their vantage point in Kamal Cauk devotees face towards the doors of the nijmandir which are set back at some distance from the courtyard proper. Darshan commences when the priest opens the doors thereby revealing the interior of the nijmandir where the divine image sits enthroned. But merely to observe the image does not constitute real darshan; rather, each devotee must feel that he or she is actually in the presence of Krishna (sākṣāt darshan). Informants typically explained this experience as a sudden and brief change of consciousness: at some stage during the darshan period they momentarily forget themselves and their physical surroundings as their minds become completely engrossed in Krishna. Moreover, the initiative for this experience is ultimately dependent upon the will of Krishna. In this sense darshan is essentially an act of divine revelation and as such is consistently linked with wider aspects of sectarian cosmology.

In Vallabhācārya's philosophy of Pure Non-dualism (Shuddhādvaita) the One all-pervading God is Brahman. The universe, including the material world (jagat) and all the souls and inanimate entities living therein, is a manifestation of Brahman and hence of the subtle essence of Brahman.

The gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are merely his subsidiary manifestations or avatāras.[14] He, or It, is described as sat, cit and ānanda, which means that He IS being, consciousness and bliss. Through His powers of revelation and concealment (āvirbhāva/tirobhāva), Brahman is sometimes invisible and sometimes makes himself visible by his own will when he participates in his divine līlā. During his creative periods of revelation, Brahman manifests the universe out of himself; innumerable fragments of sat, cit and ānanda flow out of him like sparks from a fire. In the material world (jagat) only being is manifest, whereas consciousness and bliss are latent. In souls (jīvas), being and consciousness are manifest and bliss is latent. Thus each and every soul is a fragment (ansha) of Brahman sharing in the essence of Brahman but within which bliss remains concealed. In this thoroughly wretched condition souls are ignorant of their own identity as fragments of Brahman. They experience much suffering, for they are unable to realise their innate capacity to experience bliss, which is an essential prerequisite for participation in līlā. The only hope for such misguided souls is the saving grace of Lord Krishna (Brahman) who removes ignorance (avidya) by manifesting his own ānanda or bliss which formerly lay dormant within the individual soul. The enlightened soul automatically feels intense love for Krishna and lovingly performs his sevā. It is for purposes of performing his līlā that Brahman became manifest on earth as the young Krishna. It is the Braj līlā so graphically described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa which devotees emulate by loving Krishna as did the milkmaids, Krishna's playmates, and his foster-parents.

The ritual and spatial categories pertaining to darshan in the temple are to be understood within such a context of revelation. The nijmandir represents the abode of Krishna; more specifically it is said to represent the abode of akṣara Brahman (akṣara meaning 'imperishable'), that aspect of Brahman out of which he manifests the world in order to perform his līlā. The term is appropriate since the nijmandir is the stage where episodes

from the līlā as described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa are regularly enacted. For example, the first darshan of the morning (Maṅgalā) provides a glimpse into the home of Nand Bābā in the village of Nandgaon in Braj, the priest who approaches the deity assumes the role of Krishna's foster-mother, Yashodā, and the throne upon which the deity sits is identified with Yashodā's lap. As such the physical dimensions of the nijmandir are coterminous with the alaukika world of Goloka, the celestial Braj.

During the intervals between darshan periods, the view from Kamal Cauk into the nijmandir is obstructed by the presence of a large pair of doors and a curtain, the opening of which is a highly significant ritual act, being symbolic of divine revelation - an opening of the gates of heaven. As an act of grace the deity manifests his alaukika līlā to souls occupying laukika bodies. I was told by several devotees that the doors and the curtains are like māyā (illusion), being the chief obstacle to salvation. This does not necessarily mean to say that the mundane world is merely an illusion. On the contrary, the world is real, being a manifestation of Brahman. Rather māyā is a state of spiritual ignorance in which the soul is only capable of perceiving the jagat and hence incapable of experiencing the bliss (ānanda) which is essential for a complete vision of the universe and for participation in līlā. Ignorance is itself a creation of Brahman, whereas omniscience arises when God decides to reveal to the soul His complete identity by awakening the ānanda which had hitherto lain dormant. In this sense, the opening of the doors and curtain of the nijmandir is to be seen as the removal of māyā, allowing insight into the divine līlā.

But most devotees have, by definition of their status as full initiates of the sect, already experienced some aspect of Krishna's grace. For them, the opening of the doors of darshan has a different significance, being symbolic of union and the consummation of intense longing for Krishna

borne during separation. The alternate and contrasting emotions arising during separation (viraha) and union (samyoga) are essential to the spiritual life of the sevak, being a recreation of the perfect love felt by the gopīs who first enjoyed the indescribable bliss of union, followed by the grief of separation, and then again reunion with Krishna, and so on, each state serving to heighten the emotional experience of the one which must inevitably follow.[15] The manipulation of the doors is intimately associated with the cycle of brief reunion and seemingly interminable separation. But never again will the enlightened soul experience the condition of ignorance and suffering characteristic of the laukika state; for the separation of viraha is temporary and always carries with it an anticipation of subsequent reconciliation. It is significant in this respect that devotees do not refer to the closing of the doors of darshan by using the Hindī verb to close (baṅd karnā), for it is much too strong in its implications of finality; instead they use the phrase 'paṭ maṅgal karnā' (paṭ = door, maṅgal = happiness, bliss). As one devotee explained:

> We never say the doors are closed (baṅd) because Bhagavān can never be shut out. Instead we say paṭ maṅgal. Maṅgal means ānanda. The ānanda of Bhagavān flows out of the doors.

The intervals during which the doors of darshan are closed correspond to the secret concealed līlā, while the darshan periods themselves correspond to the revealed līlā. Like any deity Krishna is entitled to his privacy while sleeping and eating, but he is also entitled to absolute privacy when he indulges in erotic love play with Svāminījī (Rādhā) in the sacred grove known as Nikunj. As I mentioned in the previous section, in every havelī there is a concealed sleeping compartment (Shaiyā Ghar) situated to one side of the nijmandir which is identified with Nikunj where Svāminījī and Krishna play and sleep together.[16] Similarly, though many Vaiṣṇavas visit the place of the nocturnal līlā in the terrestrial Vṛndāvan during the daytime, none dare enter the gates of the Nikunj at night for it is said that those who remain within will become mad and dumb and hence

unable to describe the marvellous scenes witnessed there.[17]

This interpretation of the symbolism of darshan should not obscure the fact that essentially it is meant to be a simple emotional experience. There are no strict rules of procedure defining the manner in which the congregation should salute the deity, for this would be contrary to the high emotional pitch of an occasion when devotees are overcome by intense feelings of love for Krishna. Before and during the darshan, one (or more) kīrtanyās sits adjacent to the svarūp beneath Ḍol Tivārī singing the glories of līlā. Immediately the doors are opened by the priest, the congregation surges forward in order to catch a better glimpse of the image, often uttering aloud and in unison the salutation 'Shrī Girirāj kī dharana kī jāya' (Victory to the Bearer of Govardhan Mountain). During the course of the darshan some devotees prostrate themselves before the image, either by lying full length on the floor with the top of the head and the fingertips pointing towards the deity, or else by kneeling and touching the ground with the forehead. Otherwise they just stand still and observe. Sometimes, latecomers rush into the temple shouting 'Jāya Jāya!' in the hope that the priest will heed and delay closing the doors, or open them again for a brief encore. After the last darshans of the morning and evening, prasād consisting of slices of fruit is distributed among everyone in the congregation as a mark of the deity's favour.

Approaching the Deity

The havelī is clearly divided into outer (bāharī) and inner (bhītarī) rooms. The outer rooms include the office, foodstore and the various quadrangles (Kamal Cauk, Govardhan Cauk, Jagmohan Cauk and Kīrtan Galī); the inner rooms include the deity's private apartments and the various kitchens (Shaiyā Ghar, Bhog Mandir, Sakharī Ghar, Bāl Bhog, Jal Ghar, Phūl Ghar, Pān Ghar and Dūdh Ghar). A boundary (meda) separates the inner from the outer rooms and is usually marked by means of a low step or a wooden crossbeam at the base of each doorway. Consistent with this spatial

segregation, a division of duties is maintained within the haveli: priests (bhitariyas) perform bhitari-seva, while lay-devotees perform bahari-seva. Only priests may cross the boundary and enter the inner rooms of the temple. But first they must assume an enhanced state of ritual purity by taking a purificatory bath.

Dumont has stressed that the purification of the worshipper and the implements of worship is an essential preliminary for beneficial contact with Hindu deities (1959: 31). This more often than not involves a full ritual bath and the assumption of an elevated condition of purity. In Pustimargi temples this condition is known as aparas, meaning 'not to be touched'.[18] Only after taking a bath according to the customary procedures laid down by the sect may the bhitariya enter the inner rooms in order to perform the deity's personal services. While he is in aparas, he must endeavour to preserve his condition of purity by remaining within the inner rooms and avoiding all physical contact with devotees who are not in aparas. If he ventures outside, or if he touches/is touched by an 'outsider', then his aparas is destroyed. It is 'touched' (chu gaya); he must leave his seva immediately and take another bath before returning. I was also told that aparas can be rendered 'touched' if the priest urinates, breaks wind, loses his temper, or sees an unpleasant sight.

As a rite of passage, aparas is hedged about with strict rules and procedures that are precisely observed. The following description focuses on the purificatory routine as observed by a particular temple priest, but is fairly typical of the rite as performed in all of the Pustimargi temples which I visited.

The priest, who lives on the temple premises, rises early every morning (approximately 6.30 a.m.). First of all he fills a small copper pot (lota) with water and takes it to the 'latrine'. On returning, he turns on a tap (attached to a small tank of water) using the insides of his wrists in order to avoid touching the water tank with his soiled hands.

> I wash my hands eleven times with water and mittī (a kind of earth). Each time I throw the used mittī away and then I take some fresh mittī. I wash my feet under the tap like this...

He demonstrates by rubbing his soles and heels on the wet floor so as to avoid touching his feet with his hands. He is now in a fit state to pass into the bathroom, or thatherā as it is known, a small shed-like structure situated to one side of the well at the rear of the temple. He draws water from the well, pours it into a large tank and then transfers some to a smaller tank standing above head-height in the bathroom. He transfers the water with the aid of a copper pot having a long wooden handle. The use of this implement ensures that the bath water is not 'touched' since both copper and wood are materials that are particularly resistent to impurity. In Winter the water is first heated on a stove, but in all other seasons cold water is adequate. The overhead tank in the bathing area has a tap with a wooden handle (again a precautionary device against impurity):

> I turn on the tap and wash until my body and my dhotī[19] are completely saturated. Then I leave by a different way and I go to Jalghar.

He wears special wooden sandals (kharāū) to cross the courtyard on the way from the bathroom to Jalghar. By wearing kharāū he avoids contact with any potentially defiling substances that may litter the floor of the courtyard.

> ...I wipe off surplus water from my body with my dhotī and I leave my dhotī to dry in a place where no one will touch it so that I can wear it next time...

The dhotī is also rendered pure by the bath and can therefore be worn again next time he enters aparas.

> I put on another dhotī. At this time I make sure that no water drips from my hair onto my body, otherwise I would have to take another bath. I wash my hands three times and apply a tilak. Then I take a pinch of caranāmrta[20] and recite a mantra.[21]

By now he is in aparas and fully prepared to enter the nijmandir in order to perform caranasparsha of Ṭhākurjī.

I intend to leave discussion of the full significance of aparas until I discuss the meaning of the food offering in Chapter VII. But rather than create a wrong impression at this stage I should include a few comments that will be substantiated later. Our understanding of this 'rite of passage' cannot be adequately explained in terms of purity and impurity as these concepts relate to hierarchical relationships between members of different castes. Nor should purity and impurity be considered only in their limited organic sense. I have stressed that the priest should make every possible effort to preserve his enhanced condition of purity as well as that of the paraphernalia of worship and the deity's immediate surroundings. But maintaining purity should not become a preoccupation with the result of diverting his attention from his principal object of pleasing Ṭhākurjī. Furthermore, aparas is not simply a matter of purifying the gross body: the subtle body must also be purified. Reciting mantras and taking caranāmrta are efficacious with regard to the latter. Most important of all, however, is the general belief among those priests whom I interviewed that entering aparas corresponds to the assumption of a particular attitude in which the mind becomes totally absorbed in loving and caring for Ṭhākurjī. Just as the soul (jīva) needs to be cleansed of all impurities (dosa) before it can be reconciled with Lord Krishna by means of the initiatory mantra, so also the mind of the priest must be cleared of all worldly (laukika) thoughts before he is fit to approach the svarūp of Lord Krishna. Purity conceived in this sense is a sacred or spiritual condition set apart from the ordinary profane world. Ideally, as far as the priestly sevak is concerned the aim of the purificatory bath is primarily and ultimately a state of mind. As one Mahārāja explained,

> When we approach Bhagavān it is not good for us to have contact with outside things. During sevā we must remove all laukika thoughts from our minds so that we become completely engrossed in Bhagavān.

Entering aparas, the priest assumes an alaukika state of mind which enables

him to participate in the eternal līlā of the celestial Braj.

The Divine Image

I referred earlier to the distinction drawn between darshan as an external act of piety and darshan as an internal experience in which the worshipper feels himself to be in the actual presence of Lord Krishna. This corresponds to the distinction between those persons who regard the image as a statue representing the deity and those accomplished devotees who are able to perceive the image as an actual manifestation (svarūp) of the deity, Krishna's own (sva) form (rūpa). The relationship between sevak and svarūp is concretised and personalised to such an extent that if there is some delay in preparing food offerings, Krishna goes hungry; if the food is too hot, Krishna might burn his mouth; if the nijmandir is not kept adequately warm in Winter, Krishna could catch a cold. The generous offerings of vittajā-sevā and the exquisite care and tenderness shown in tanujā-sevā are meaningful inasmuch as the Krishna svarūp is said to respond to the ministrations of his worshippers with the sensitivities of a living child. It is this element of personality attributed to the Krishna svarūp that I now intend to explore further. In particular I ask how are we to interpret devotees' statements that the image is an actual manifestation of Lord Krishna and hence, what meanings are we to attach to those ritual acts which treat the image as Krishna incarnate? This will involve an examination of: 1) the distinctions which sevaks draw between Puṣṭimārgi images and images worshipped in non-sectarian temples, and 2) why it appears that some Puṣṭimārgi images are held in greater esteem than others.

One approach to an understanding of the idea of sacred images is to regard them as symbolic intermediaries linking the separate spheres of the human and the divine. They provide a conceptual bridge between gods and men enabling communication between them. By virtue of their in-between status they are typically furnished with ambiguous attributes since they

belong exclusively to neither sphere and yet share in the reality of both - the mysterious reality of the divine and the phenomenal reality of the human. On the one hand they are material objects firmly embedded in the tangible world, while on the other hand they are symbolic representations of a metaphysical order and as such become the focus of veneration (or desecration):

> When ritual objects (a crucifix, a portrait of the child Jesus, the bread and wine of the communion service) serve as material representations of divinity in a ritual context, they are affected by the aura of sanctity which initially belongs to the metaphysical concept in the mind. (Leach, 1976: 38)

The Structuralist methods associated with the work of Levi-Strauss and his leading English admirer-cum-critic, Edmund Leach, have proved useful in explaining the intellectual functions of the anomalous creatures of mythical thought in their capacity to mediate between the contrasting categories of the human and the divine, as well as other universally recognised paired opposites (male/female, good/bad, mortal/immortal, etc.):

> Mediation (in this sense) is always achieved by introducing a third category which is 'abnormal' or 'anomalous' in terms of ordinary 'rational' categories. Myths are full of fabulous monsters, incarnate gods, virgin mothers. This middle ground is abnormal, non-rational, holy. It is typically the focus of all taboo and ritual observance. (Leach, 1969: 11)

Providing we accept, as does Leach, that a basic problem of religion is the establishment of communication between men and gods, then religious symbols (incarnate gods, names of gods, idols, relics, saints, holy books, etc.) all represent attempts to mediate between seemingly irreconcilable opposites; their ambiguity is their potency.

But their very ambiguity often makes them a focus of dispute, critical dogmatism, and subtle theological speculation. The controversies surrounding the worship of idols and the interpretation of the eucharist in Christian tradition are well known in this respect. Attitudes towards idol worship have differed according to the alleged status of the image in relation to the concept of the one transcendent, invisible God. Although most Christian

sects have accepted the belief that Jesus is the son of God who lived on earth as a man, there has long been disagreement concerning the use of concrete and linear representations of Jesus in worship, and this despite the unequivocal prohibition of idols in the Second Commandment. During the first centuries of the Christian era disputes were related to church decoration. Lifelike statues were open to condemnation as graven images. But opinions were more varied concerning the use of paintings and mozaics. Towards the end of the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great justified the use of paintings for didactic purposes, that is, as a medium specifically adopted for the communication of religious teachings and episodes in a way that might easily be understood by the illiterate members of the congregation (Gombrich, 1972, pp. 95-96). Paintings were therefore the 'poor man's bible'. This middle-of-the-road approach was soon superseded on both sides by opposing factions in the Eastern Church centred on Byzantium. On the one side were the Iconoclasts or 'image-breakers' who, in keeping with the Commandments, forbade all images of a religious nature. Their opponents supported the worship of icons of Christ, the Virgin and the Saints, treating these objects with a high degree of reverence. Icons were bowed down to, kissed and credited with miraculous powers of warding off misfortune. The justification offered by the icon worshippers was based on the Incarnation and has been nicely summarised by Gombrich:

> If God in His mercy could decide to reveal Himself to mortal eyes in the human nature of Christ, why should He not also be willing to manifest Himself in visible images? We do not worship these images themselves as the pagans did. We worship God and the Saints through or across their images. (Gombrich, 1972: 98)

In this sense, to worship the icon is to worship that for which it stands. As a symbol it is intimately linked to the concept of divinity in that it is through the icon that God manifests himself to the worshipper and through which the worshipper is able to conceive of, and to approach, God; as Tillich puts it 'The symbol participates in the reality of that

for which it stands' (Tillich, 1968, vol. 1, p.265). But from the point of view of the Iconoclasts, and after the Reformation the Protestant sects, icons and all concrete images were either considered to have no relationship towards the divine, or to be positively anti-divine. Either they were regarded as inanimate lumps of stone, wood or whatever, or else they were false idols, graven images, and hence demonic. Those who worshipped them were said to be deluded, or even to be consciously participating in sin.

This brief insight into the Christian experience illustrates what Tillich refers to as an 'inescapable inner tension' in the idea of gods and holy objects 'from primitive prayer to the most elaborate theological system' (1968, 1, p.234). Tillich begins with the premise that God is 'the name for that which concerns men ultimately'. But since it is impossible to be concerned about something which cannot be encountered concretely, either in reality or in the imagination, gods are conceived of as 'beings': 'They are experienced, named, and defined in concrete intuitive (anshaulich) terms through the exhaustive use of all the ontological elements of finitude' (ibid., p.235). It is this that makes them concrete, and yet 'They also have characteristics in which their categorical finitude is radically transcended.... they transcend their own finitude in power of meaning and in the embodiment of meaning'. The tension between the ultimacy and the concreteness of religious concern is evident in attitudes towards holy objects, holiness being present wherever the divine is manifest:

> Holiness cannot become actual except through holy 'objects'. But holy objects are not holy in and of themselves. They are holy only by negating themselves in pointing to the divine of which they are mediums. If they establish themselves as holy they become demonic.... The representations of man's ultimate concern - holy objects - tend to become his ultimate concern. They are transformed into idols. Holiness provokes idolatry. (Ibid., pp.239-240)

I have considered image worship in terms of the Christian experience and I have mentioned the approaches of two theorists, the one a social anthropologist and the other a theologian-cum-phenomenologist, because an

analysis of the image and image worship in the context of Hinduism in general and Puṣṭimārga in particular requires that we should be fully aware of those assumptions that we shall have to relinquish.

Although Tillich's argument is convincing when applied in the context of Christian, and also Jewish and Muslim traditions, we should remain sceptical in extending it to cover all forms of religious thought and practice. In the first place, the 'problem' of idolatry reflects the preoccupation of the Occidental religions with their contempt for image worship, a preoccupation which is not a universal phenomenon, except in the sense that these religions would regard it as such. The Christian missionaries who encountered unashamed image worship in India were quick to categorise Hinduism as a religion of heathens bowing down to wood and stone. Those western scholars who were sympathetic towards Hinduism stressed the contrast between 'higher Hinduism' with its abstract philosophical speculation and its monotheistic character, and 'popular Hinduism' with its superstitions, and its grotesque veneration of crude images, stones, trees, snakes, and malevolent mother-goddesses. This polarisation of different elements of Hindu thought and practice, largely created by the subjective evaluations of Western scholars and sustained by Hindu apologists, has seriously obstructed analysis of the underlying structures of the whole matrix of beliefs and practices labelled 'Hinduism'.

In the second place, Tillich assumes the conceptualisation of a fundamental duality comprising the 'human' and the 'divine' as two separate and mutually exclusive categories. Hence, holy objects are intermediaries; they point to the divine but are not divine of themselves; they are neither one nor the other; they are anomalous and display an inner tension. Moreover, holiness is thought to derive from an external source - the divine. But in moving on to a discussion of the conceptual status of the image in Puṣṭimārga we must be prepared to conceive of another form of dualism which is ultimately reducible to a pure monism. Earlier I explained how the human and the divine are conceived of as essentially the same. This

difference is crucial to our understanding of svarūp-sevā. Although the svarūp can be seen as a symbolic intermediary bridging the human (unrealised divinity) and the divine, it can also be regarded as divine in and of itself, being an external projection of the divinity which manifests itself from within the individual (human) subject.[22]

The image of Krishna is referred to as a svarūp, and devotees are quick to point out the fact that it is a svarūp as distinct from a mūrti, the common term in Hindī for an idol. As explained earlier the term svarūp can be literally translated as Krishna's own (sva) form (rūpa), a meaning frequently intensified by the addition of the adjective sākṣāt, implying that the svarūp is, in the eyes of devotees, an actual visible manifestation of Lord Krishna. It has been suggested that a mūrti, as distinct from a svarūp, is regarded by Puṣṭimārgis as a lifeless statue (see Barz 1976; 48). But this way of explaining the difference between a mūrti and a svarūp is open to misinterpretation. It is not simply a matter of evaluating the respective attributes of the two kinds of image, rather the difference is one of their worshippers' attitudes towards them. One key to the distinction as conceptualised by Puṣṭimārgis lies in the conviction that a mūrti can be transformed into a svarūp under appropriate conditions, whereas a svarūp can never revert to the status of being a mūrti. The fulfilment of this transformation depends upon the following conditions.

The establishment of an image (mūrti) in a Hindu temple is accompanied by a ritual of prān-pratiṣṭhā whereby life (prān) is invoked into the image by a Brahman priest through the recitation of Sanskrit mantras and the performance of a complicated procedure involving sixteen stages, among them an invocation (āvāhan) to the deity to take up residence in the image, meditation (dhyān), bathing the image (snān), dressing (vastra), applying sandalwood and rice grains (candan, akṣat), offering flowers (puṣpa), etc. Thereafter the image becomes an object worthy of veneration. In Puṣṭimārga, however, an image is transformed into a svarūp through the touch of a

Mahārāja who must be an agnatic descendant of Vallabhācārya. Prior to transformation the image is known as a mūrti. By bathing the image in the five sacred substances (pāñcāmṛta, including yoghurt, milk, ghee, honey and sugar) and by offering it prasād which has already been consecrated (having been offered to an established svarūp), the Mahārāja makes the image puṣṭi. We have seen that the word puṣṭi is synonymous with 'grace'; it also implies nourishment, strength and support. In this sense, the consecration of an image and the initiation of a devotee (Chapter IV, pp. 129-133) have marked similarities. In the same way that the Mahārāja as intermediary between Krishna and the devotee and as an incarnation of Krishna bestows the grace (puṣṭi) of Krishna on the individual soul at the time of initiation, so he also transfers grace to the image such that it is thereby infused with the essence of Krishna as fire penetrates an iron ball (Shah, 1969:184). Once the image has become a puṣṭi-svarūp, then it is a 'person' requiring constant care and attention. Worship should never lapse even if it should become broken (khaṅdit) through an accident, whereas if a mūrti suffers the same fate it becomes useless for worship; the deity departs from the image. In Puṣṭimārga there is no evidence of regularly performed rituals in which the deity is summoned to take up temporary residence in an image. The svarūp always remains divine.

Those svarūpas in the possession of devotees and worshipped in the home are consecrated in the same manner. Either the devotee will request his guru to consecrate an image specially for him, or he (or she) inherits a svarūp from his father or mother.[23] But worship of a domestic image is not to be entered into lightly, for it requires much time and effort on the part of the sevak. Ṭhākurjī becomes a new member of the family. If a devotee is unable to maintain full sevā, then he must return the svarūp to his guru who will ensure that it is properly cared for by passing it on to another disciple or by establishing it in a temple. Most devotees in Ujjain possess small framed pictures of Shrī Nāthjī, many of which have

been consecrated by their gurus.[24] Consecrated pictures are not considered to require as much unremitting care and attention as consecrated images.

Those sevaks originally initiated by Vallabhācārya and Viṭṭhālnathjī were also presented with their own svarūpas for domestic worship. In addition Viṭṭhalnāthjī collected nine personal svarūpas which he handed over to his seven sons just before his death, the eldest son receiving the svarūp of Shrī Nāthjī. As I explained earlier (Chapter III), each son established his own temple and thereafter rights to supervise the worship of the nine svarūpas was inherited according to a principle of primogeniture (in this case patrilineally). These 'Nine Svarūpas' (Navsvarūp) have until the present day been associated with the Seven Houses of the Sampradāya and remain in the care of the descendants of the seven sons of Viṭṭhalnāthjī. The Nine Svarupās are accorded a pre-eminent (mukhya) status among sectarian images, their distinctive characteristics being apparent in the terms popularly used to describe them:

1. They are known as svayambhū deities meaning that they are self-manifested. The Vārtā literature makes no mention of the manufacture of images, rather those whose origins are revealed were discovered in appropriately mysterious circumstances. Several were found buried in the sand on the banks of the holy Yamunā river.[25] The first svarup to 'emerge' was that of Shrī Nāthjī.
2. They are also referred to as the sevya-svarūpas of Vallabhācārya and Viṭṭhalnāthjī, meaning that they were worshipped by these two gurus who were themselves regarded as manifestations of Krishna.
3. They are known as nidhi-svarupās. The term nidhi is particularly appropriate since according to legend the nidhis were the nine treasures belonging to Kubera, the god of riches. We shall see below that the full meaning of the term is of some significance; Monier-Williams gives '...a place for deposits or storing up, a receptacle; ...a store, hoard, treasure'.[26]

The divine status of the Nine Svarūpas and the spiritual status of

the seven chief Mahārājas (Tilkāyats) of the Seven Houses is complementary. On the one hand, each of the seven Mahārājas derives additional prestige from his exclusive right to the worship of the nidhi-svarūp in his possession, while on the other hand, the nidhi-svarūpas are held in high esteem because they have been worshipped continuously by a line of chief Mahārājas descended from Vallabhācārya. In this respect, the relationship between chief Mahārāja and nidhi-svarūp is one of mutual reinforcement, each serving to reinforce the spiritual stature of the other.

Vallabhācārya and Shrī Nāthjī are closely identified, as are the Seven Houses of the Vallabha Dynasty and the nidhi-svarūpas. The Mahārājas regard the nidhis as their lineage deities (kul-devatā). There is also a notion that Krishna manifested himself as Shrī Nāthjī, the object of sevā, and Vallabhācārya, the sevak, so that he could worship himself (Bhatt, 1979:74). In sectarian belief Shrī Nāthjī and Vallabha are twin avatāras of the Supreme Lord, Puruṣottama, simultaneously manifested.

Although the terms listed above are generally used to indicate the pre-eminent status of the Navsvarūp as distinct from the mass of temple and domestic svarūpas, it is significant that the prestige of many deities is often enhanced in the eyes of their worshippers if their biographies reveal that they were originally worshipped by Vallabhācārya and his close disciples, if they appeared in mysterious circumstances, or if they appeared as subsidiary manifestations of the Nine Svarūpas. In several temples which I attended, devotees pointed out to me that their deities were self-manifested rather than man-made. Deities are often said to have been discovered on river banks, in wells, or while excavating the foundations for a new house. The svarūp of Shrī Nāthjī in Ujjain (Temple C), a 'duplicate' of the image first identified by Vallabhācārya, was discovered in such a manner. One version of the discovery was related to me as follows (see Chapter 11, p. 69):

> A Brahman and his wife who lived in Ujjain had much bhāva for Shrī Nāthjī. So strong was their devotion that they

> regularly used to travel all the way to Nāthdwāra for darshan. One night the Brahman had a dream in which Shrī Nāthjī said to him 'You have come all this way to see me many times, now I will come to you in Ujjain.' A few days later while the Brahman was digging a well, he found a svarūp of Shrī Nāthjī. The Brahman and his wife were very happy and installed the svarūp in a temple. In this way they received Shrī Nāthjī's grace.

Moreover, of those svarūpas residing in Ujjain temples, two are described as nidhis on the grounds that they were consecrated by Vallabhācārya (or Viṭṭhalnāthjī) who presented them to two of his disciples. I give here details of the biography of the svarūp of Shrī Madan Mohan jī (Temple B) as related by a sevak (see Chapter 11, p. 68):

> Once Akbar sent one of his ministers to supervise the protection of trees in Kāmavan. The assistant, Alikhān Paṭhān (a Muslim) took his wife and daughter with him. His daughter was only a little girl at the time and she used to play games with the other Puṣṭimārgi children. By and by she learnt some of the principles of Puṣṭimārga from the other children and decided that she would like to perform sevā of Ṭhakūrjī. So she asked her father 'Please bring me a svarūp of Ṭhakūrjī so that I can do sevā and offer bhog.' At first her father ignored the request. But she would have her way. Because Alikhān loved his daughter very much, he decided to obtain a svarūp from Viṭṭhalnāthjī. At the time he had called some bricklayers to build a new house. While they were digging the foundations the svarūp of Shrī Madan Mohan jī appeared and she began to do sevā as best she knew how. Ṭhākurjī loved her very much and used to give her sākṣāt darshan. They often used to play chess together. When she grew older, she and Ṭhakūrjī used to play Rās līlā together. Later Alikhān also became a disciple of Viṭṭhalnāthjī. Soon the time came for his daughter to be married. She didn't want to marry because she only had time for Ṭhākurjī. Nevertheless, she was married to a Muslim boy in Ujjain. She brought her Ṭhākurjī with her and her husband built this temple for them. Shrī Madan Mohanjī was her Ṭhākurjī. It is a nidhi-svarūp because it was given to her by Shrī Mahāprabhujī.

What both the above accounts also reveal is the highly intimate and personal nature of the relationship existing between the svarūpas and their sevaks. When Alikhān Paṭhān's daughter was a child, Ṭhākurjī was her playmate. When she was a young lady, Ṭhākurjī was her lover. I was told that the Brahman and his wife mentioned above were childless, but they loved and treated the svarūp of Shrī Nāthjī as their very own son.

The key to an understanding of the nature of the image and image worship in Puṣṭimārga lies in the devotional attitude (bhāva) of the devotee. By

experiencing bhāva the worshipper feels himself or herself to be in the actual presence of Lord Krishna and shares in the experience of Krishna's ānanda. Students of comparative religion may be tempted to translate this devotional attitude as 'faith' or 'belief'. But it is important for us to appreciate the precise meanings of these religious attitudes within their respective cultural contexts. For a Christian, to 'have faith' or to 'believe' implies the placing of trust or confidence in the idea that God exists; it is the acceptance of a metaphysical reality or ultimate truth even though it may elude normal faculties of perception and reason. By placing one's trust in God, the devotee achieves a state of spiritual awareness or intuition in which he or she can state 'I know God exists'. Through faith the devotee knows that the Bible is the Word of God and Christ is the Word made Flesh. Similarly in the Catholic system of relatives, images of the Virgin, the saints, Christ etc. are holy in the sense that they serve as intermediaries between man and God: through which God manifests himself to the faithful and the faithful approach and worship God. Thus far, the parallel with svarūp-sevā would appear to be appropriate - the statement by my informants 'it is our bhāva that the svarūp is god' could be interpreted as implying that worshippers realise the svarūp to be a manifestation of the Supreme God, Shrī Kṛṣṇa Parabrāhman, hence embodying the divine qualities of grace (puṣṭi) and bliss (ānanda) and worshipped as such. According to this model 'holiness' or 'divinity' is seen as emanating from an external source (divinity) through a symbolic intermediary (image) and finally flowing into the heart of the devotee. The Christian problem, as Tillich points out, is that holy images as symbolic intermediaries must negate themselves by pointing to the divine, but there is always the danger that they might be worshipped as intrinsically holy, as objects of ultimate concern. The dogmatic statements surrounding the worship of idols mentioned earlier represent attempts to define precisely, or subtly, the nature of the object with exclusive reference to the divine.

Holy objects are either worshipped because the worshipper believes them to be embodiments of holiness, or they are desecrated because men believe them to be false idols and embodiments of evil. But this line of enquiry is not helpful in this particular analysis. I shall explain.

The svarūp is the object of the devotional emotion known as bhāva, an experience which receives its palpable expression in sevā. Bhāva is a meaningful emotion insofar as it is felt for Krishna. The assiduous and lavish attention paid to the svarūp in sevā is not only encouraged on the grounds that it is divine and should be revered as such, but also because by performing sevā the devotee exults in the experience of pleasing Krishna. Like sevā, bhāva is both the means and the end of devotional striving. For the devotee to ask 'How can Ṭhākurjī catch a cold? How can he burn his mouth?' is contrary to pure devotional emotions; for while it is accepted that Krishna as the Supreme Lord is above all such concerns, it is important that the devotee experiences concern for Krishna's well-being, a concern intensified by regarding Krishna as a helpless child in need of constant loving care. Even though devotees may remain ignorant of the ultimate and abstract nature of Brahman, bhāva as an emotional experience renders all such abstract contemplation superfluous. The following story related to me by a kīrtanyā, though superficially amusing, succinctly illustrates the stress placed on the devotional attitude of the devotee towards the object of devotion, regardless of the precise nature of the object worshipped:

> A shepherd wanted to know about God. One day a sādhu was passing by. So the shepherd asked him 'Where is God?' The sādhu replied saying that God was in each and everything. 'Is God in this lamb?' asked the shepherd. 'Yes God is in that lamb,' replied the sādhu. After the sādhu had gone the shepherd began to worship the lamb. Thinking that the lamb was God, he cared for it by all means. Every morning he bathed it very carefully and gave it good food to eat. One day he visited a temple and saw God being rocked in a cradle by the priests. So he thought that he would do the same for his own God. He was illiterate. He tied the lamb's legs together with a rope and hung it up and then began to sing a bhajan - 'O my husband, swing gently. You have much beautiful wool on your body'; at the same time he used to pick out the bugs. After some time the lamb became very ill. Then God

> came and rescued the lamb and gave the shepherd knowledge so that he became a very learned person. Bhakti depends on bhāva. If a person has the bhāva to do something, then nothing will stop him. The shepherd had bhakti in his heart.

Those who experience bhāva are by definition divine souls (daivi jīva) aware of their innate identity as fragments of Brahman. Their divinity is not a quality received from Krishna, rather it is through Krishna's grace that the divine qualities within them are made manifest. They are capable of experiencing bliss (ānanda) which enables them to participate with Krishna in līlā. It is said that 'God really exists in bhāva' (bhāve hī vidhyate deva). The image is Krishna as experienced by the devotee. In this sense it is appropriate to say that the image derives its sanctity from the divine souls who worship it. The idea that devotees worship the image because it is divine can be reversed: the image is divine because devotees regard and treat it as an object of worship. Without bhāva the devotee only perceives the material image.[27]

Bhāva is not suddenly acquired, it grows in intensity within the mind of the worshipper; and as it grows the svarūp, being the object of worship, also gradually assumes an independent personality in the eyes of the devotee. Ultimately, when the devotee acquires perfect bhāva, then the svarūp appears as a perfect manifestation of Krishna and both participate together in līlā.

So far I have not explained why some svarūpas are described as pre-eminent (mukhya). What of the Nine nidhi Svarūpas? The answer lies in their biographies. Those svarūpas known as nidhis were the sevya-svarūpas of Vallabhācārya, Viṭṭhalnāthjī and their leading disciples. When we begin to consider the personal biographies of the different svarūpas, it appears that their reputations are intimately associated with the pedigree of their former worshippers. The Nine nidhis were the sevya-svarūpas of Vallabhācārya and Viṭṭhalnāthjī, and therefore they have been worshipped continuously by the chiefs, the Tilkāyats, of the Seven Houses of the Vallabha Dynasty. It is convenient at this point to remind ourselves of the full meaning of the

word nidhi,

> ... a place for deposits or storing up, a receptacle;
> ... a store, hoard, treasure....

In this sense, then, the nidhis are 'treasures' in that they are depositories of the intense love (bhāva) experienced by their sevaks. They are rich stores of the personal sentiments of those accomplished souls who worship and who worshipped them, among them the progeny of Vallabhācārya. I hesitate to carry the economic connotations too far but it should be mentioned that one meaning of the word Tilkāyat is 'rich, possessed of ready money', and another meaning of the word bhāva is 'market price/value'.[28] There appears to be some conceptual correspondence between material wealth and emotional wealth. The Tilkāyats are rich in bhāva, in both a material and a spiritual sense. They bestow their bhāva on their treasured deities. Their deities are rich stores of emotion. The correspondence extends to the biographies of many svarūpas. Take, for instance, the svarūp of Shrī Nāthjī at Ujjain mentioned above. It is said that the Brahman and his wife who brought the svarūp to Ujjain some two hundred years ago were extremely wealthy. He is remembered by the phrase 'Mādhav jī Morarjī nagda sab bagda' which roughly translated means 'everything appears to be rubbish compared with the wealth of Mādhav jī Morarjī'. When his wife used to walk through the bazar, pearls fell from her clothes. They were childless but no matter, for their bhāva for Shrī Nāthjī was so great that the deity came to live with them as their own son.

I am now in a position to summarise our findings concerning the rationale underlying the conceptual status of the svarūp.

First, the initiation of the devotee and the consecration of an image are conceptually similar. In both cases the guru as bestower of Krishna's grace makes manifest those divine qualities which formerly lay dormant within the soul (jīva) and the image (mūrti). The divine identity of both soul and image is realised when the guru makes the soul and the image pusti.

Second, the svarūp becomes an actual manifestation of Lord Krishna through the combined efforts of the guru and the devotee. Although the guru initiates the process of the transformation of a mūrti into a svarūp, the full identity of the svarūp is revealed only through the efforts of the sevak. This is initiated by the act of acquiring an image and starting to worship it. Hence, the devotee is also instrumental in making the svarūp puṣṭi by nourishing and sustaining it with loving care.

Third, the loving emotions of the sevak become established in the svarūp. Through sevā, the sevak projects his emotions into the svarūp and then re-experiences them. The sevak therefore experiences the bliss aspect of his own divinity as established in the svarūp. The svarūp is a depository of his own loving emotions. I can now understand what a close Puṣṭimārgi informant meant when he insisted that every time he took darshan, Ṭhākurjī seemed to feel exactly as he did himself. When he was happy, Ṭhākurjī would smile back at him: but when he was sad, Ṭhākurjī would look very dejected.

Fourth, the notion that the svarūp stores up the devotional attributes of the accomplished souls who worship it means that the sevak who approaches it with pure bhāva is able to re-experience the intense devotion of his or her eminent predecessors. It is perhaps for this reason that the oral traditions pertaining to the biographies of temple svarūpas lay such emphasis on the personalities of their former sevaks.

When all the sacred persons are seen as embodying the same qualities, as sharing in the self-same nature (tadātmīya), then the problems and controversies surrounding the worship of holy objects are wholly irrelevant.

Notes to Chapter V

1. The terrestrial Braj and the celestial Braj (Goloka) are really one and the same place. The notion also occurs in Bengal Vaishnavism: '...his (Krishna's) highest Paradise, which is situated beyond all the Lokas, also exists on the phenomenal earth. The terrestrial Goloka or Vṛndāvana is thus not essentially different but really identical with the celestial Goloka or Vṛndāvana, and the Lord Kṛṣṇa exists eternally in both places with the same retinue'. (De, 1961:334).

2. Govardhan Hill, situated near Mathurā in the state of Uttar Pradesh, is a low-lying hill some fourteen miles in circumference, though it is alleged to have been bigger during the time of Lord Krishna's incarnation. The mythological significance of the Mountain/Hill is considered in Chapter VIII.

3. The copy in my possession was published at Nāthdwarā by Prakāshak Vidhyavibhāg (samvat 2025, 1968 AD). The first twenty-seven pages of this edition have recently been translated into English by Vaudeville (1980).

4. It is significant that the upraised arm of the image should have been linked with the day on which snakes are worshipped with offerings of milk. Vaudeville has written a fascinating article in which she argues convincingly that the Shrī Nāthjī image originated in a pre-existing serpent cult centred on Govardhan Hill which was subsequently appropriated by the Vallabha sect and accommodated within its own devotional tradition (Vaudeville, 1980, pp. 1-15).

5. For details of Vallabha's birth see Chapter III, pp. 90f. Vaudeville seems to infer that the reference to Agni-Kuṇḍ in the SNPV implies a belief that Vallabha emerged from a sacred tank of that name in Braj. But surely the reference is to Vallabha's birth from a fiery hearth in the forest near Campāraṇya (Vaudeville, 1980:29, footnote 25).

6. The image identified itself as Devadaman, Indradaman and Nāgadaman. Devadaman means 'Subduer of the Gods', Indradaman means 'Subduer of Indra', and Nāgadaman means 'Subduer of the Serpent'. The appellations refer to three of Krishna's triumphs as described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

7. Annaprāshan, or 'rice boiled in milk', also refers to the life-cycle ritual when a child is first offered this preparation at the age of about six months (the 'weaning ceremony'). This choice of food would have been particularly appropriate for the occasion on which the full service of the infant deity was inaugurated.

8. The events and personalities associated with the establishment of the first temple are recorded in the SNPV (pp.19-23) and CVV (account 24, pp.152-155).

9. Mount Meru, the sacred world mountain, which is normally represented by the shikhara ('mountain peak') in Hindu temple cosmology, is substituted in sectarian cosmology by the sacred Mount Govardhan.

10. A full account of the life of Kṛṣṇadās is given in CVV (pp.526-71) and has been translated into English by Barz (1976, pp.207-56).

11. The Bengālī priests were expelled on the pretext that 1) Shrī Nāthjī resented the fact that they had placed an image of their own goddess (presumably Rādhā) next to him in the inner-sanctum, and 2) that they had been surreptitiously sending donations originally intended for Shrī Nāthjī to their own gurus living in the nearby town of Vṛndāvan.

12. Girirāj is worshipped as a small stone from Govardhan Hill dressed in a yellow smock and adorned with a tiny garland of flowers. The svarūp stands on a shelf in this room and devotees approach it performing caraṇasparsha (cf. Vaudeville, 1980: 11).

13. Darshan refers to the act of observing or having sight of a deity, sacred relic or an eminent person such as a guru. It is therefore normally used to indicate the periods in temples during which the doors of the inner sanctum are open for the benefit of the laity. The word is also used to describe a system of philosophy, in which case it has connotations of the realisation of ultimate truth. It is interesting that the term lays stress on the subject (the seer, dṛṣṭā) and not the object (that which is seen).

14. These subsidiary gods are 'limited' in the sense that they fall under the three material attributes (guṇa) of purity (sāttva), passion (rājas) and lethargy (tāmas). Only Brahman is uninfluenced by these attributes and is therefore known as nirguṇa or 'quality-less'.

15. See Barz (1976:150, footnote) for a precise explanation of the concepts of 'union' and 'separation' in Puṣṭimārgi thought.

16. In some havelīs an image of Shrī Svāminījī is said to reside permanently

in Ṭhākurjī's bedroom though it is never revealed to the laity. If the svarūp is moveable, the priest will place it next to Svāminījī in Shaiyā Ghar every night. If the svarūp is immovable, the doors of Shaiyā Ghar can be left open so that Ṭhākurjī is free to visit her at will. The Niḳunj Līlā is only open to the most accomplished souls who experience the devotional emotions of the gopīs. But even the gopīs discreetly retire while Krishna and Svāminījī are making love in Nikunj. See Vaudeville (1980: 44, footnote 19) for a note on the status of Shrī Svāminījī in Sampradāyik tradition.

17. Alternatively, the mad may become sane. The case of one Puṣṭimārgi woman living in Ujjain was explained to me by a devotee: 'A man who comes here regularly for darshan once went on a pilgrimage to Braj. His mother was mad at the time so he took her along with him in the hope that she might be cured. Somehow she remained inside the Kunj at night. When she was found the following morning she was no longer mad. She wasn't dumb, but she couldn't describe what had happened there.'

18. Aparas is derived from the Sanskrit aspṛshya meaning 'untouchable, not to be touched'.

19. The clothes worn in sevā include a white cotton upper-garment that is tied at the front by means of strings (bagalbaṅdī or aṅgarkha), a shawl (uparnā), a white cotton under-garment consisting of a length of unstitched cloth (laṅgoṭ), and a white cotton loincloth (dhotī). Silk cloth is considered better than cotton; man-made cloth is proscribed. Stitched clothes and clothes with buttons are also prohibited (e.g. shirts, trousers and pyjamas).

20. Caraṇāmṛta, meaning 'nectar of the feet', is a clay substance obtained from the banks of the river Yamunā in Braj whereupon Krishna treads his līlā. Puṣṭimārgis are supposed to take a pinch first thing every morning. It is often added to meals, Bathing purifies the outside of the body, caraṇāmṛta purifies the insides.

21. The mantra is not to be repeated to outsiders and I do not intend to betray confidences, save to say that it is an invocation to Vishnu to bestow certain blessings on the priest, including a long life, freedom from disease and freedom from rebirth. I should add here that the aparas assumed by bhītariyās is normally referred to as khāsā aparas or 'strict' aparas as distinct from a lesser state of ritual purity known as sevakī aparas which all sevaks can assume after taking a

ritual bath. Sevakī aparas enables worshippers to prepare pān and milk-sweets for the temple deity. It is also necessary for those householders who perform sevā of a family deity. The two conditions are sometimes differentiated as badī (greater) aparas and chotī (lesser) aparas.

22. I am greatly indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Audrey Cantlie, who encouraged me to explore this particular theme and who is herself now working on the relationship between subject and object in the context of Hindu thought.

23. An initiate who intends to perform svarūp-sevā in his home should first receive the permission of his guru. Images are inherited both patrilineally and matrilineally.

24. The picture (cittra) is also rendered puṣṭi by the guru and hence referred to as a puṣṭi-cittra as distinct from unconsecrated pictures. One stipulation is that the cittra must be hand-painted by the Nāthdwāra painters, presumably because they have the appropriate divine attitude (bhāva) which they establish in the picture through the very act of painting.

25. See, for example, CVV (p.116). A female disciple from Mahāban finds four images in the sandbanks of the Yamunā river. She passes them on to Vallabha who bathes them in the five sacred substances (pāñcāmṛta - snān) and distributes them among four of his disciples.

26. See Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1899.

27. Dr. Cantlie informs me that there is a belief among Devi worshippers in Bengal that ordinary people with the faculty of gross sight are only able to see the material image, but sādhus who practise meditation (dhyān) and the continuous recitation of mantras (japa) develop the faculty of subtle sight which enables them to observe the goddess moving, playing and even talking.

28. I was aware on several occasions that devotees used the word bhāva punningly. Unfortunately, I did not always have the linguistic competence to appreciate this amusing device.

CHAPTER VI

THE TEMPLE CALENDAR

In Chapter IV I concentrated on devotion as an attitude of mind internal to the performer while saying comparatively little about the actual performance of devotional worship. I also explained the three-fold classification of sevā characterised by internal and external modes of expression: service rendered by means of the physical body (tanujā-sevā), by means of wealth and property (vittajā-sevā), and mental service (mānasī-sevā). Devotees make a similar distinction between svarūp-sevā, which involves tanujā-sevā and vittajā-sevā, and nām-sevā, or the continuous and silent repetition of the name of Krishna while focusing the mind on his various līlās. Nām-sevā should be practised during those periods when the devotee is not actively engaged in the worship of the divine image. Having described the physical-cum-metaphysical layout of the Puṣṭimārgi havelī in the previous chapter, I now propose to explore more fully those activities classed as svarūp-sevā which are performed within the temple precincts and which constitute the ritual core of routine temple life.

The treatment of the divine image follows established methods and procedures which are classified and arranged within a formal devotional rubric. According to this rubric, the worship is subdivided into a number of specialised forms or techniques which are blended together to make up a complete performance culminating in the darshan, which represents a particular episode from the Krishna līlā. The darshans, or līlā episodes, are further arranged in chronological sequence such that they correspond to the daily and seasonal life of the young Krishna. This

structure is adopted as the basic framework for a description of temple ritual. It will be followed by an analysis of the symbolic form, content and meaning of the temple programme.

The Three Forms of Svarūp-Sevā

Three main forms of svarūp-sevā are distinguished according to their respective modes of expression: first, rāga-sevā, the singing of devotional songs in the presence of the image; second shṛṅgār-sevā, the adornment of the image and its surroundings; and third, bhog-sevā, the preparation of foods to be offered to the image and later retrieved as prasād. I shall reserve consideration of bhog-sevā until the following chapter.

Rāga-sevā (also known as kīrtan-sevā). This refers to the singing of devotional lyrics (padas) in appropriate melodies (rāgas) by a kīrtanyā who sits before the doors of the nijmandir in Ḍol Tivārī and performs just before and during darshan periods. Most of the padas sung in the havelīs are attributed to four disciples of Vallabhācārya and four disciples of Viṭṭhalnāthjī. With reference to their literary talents, these poets are known collectively as the Aṣṭachāp or the 'Eight Seals', but more significantly they are known by their divine (alaukika) identities as participants in līlā, in which case they are called Aṣṭasakhā on account of their being manifestations of the eight (aṣṭa) intimate male cowherd companions (sakhā) of Gopāl Krishna during the daytime līlās. Moreover, by virtue of their pure devotion, these poets were also able to participate in the secret night-time līlā as the eight intimate female companions (Aṣṭasakhī) of Krishna, the handsome lover. The Eight Poets, together with their divine identities, are as follows:

Disciples of Vallabhācārya[1]:

	Kīrtanyā	Sakhā	Sakhī
1.	Sūrdās	Kṛṣṇasakhā	Campakalatā
2.	Paramānandadās	Toṣa (Toka)	Candrabhāgā
3.	Kumbhandās	Arjun	Visākhā
4.	Kṛṣṇadās	Ṛṣabha	Lalitājī

Disciples of Vitthalnāthjī[2]:

5.	Govindasvāmī	Shrīdāmā	Bhāmā
6.	Chītasvāmī	Subal	Padmā
7.	Caturbhujdās	Vishāl	Vimalā (Raṇgadevi)
8.	Nandadās	Bhoja	Candralekhā

As sakhās and sakhīs these eight poets were able to experience first-hand the actual events of līlā which they could record vividly and spontaneously in their poems. Perhaps the most striking aspect of their work is its constant preoccupation with what would normally appear to be trivial detail. In this respect Barz has confessed his initial difficulty in appreciating the poetry of Sūrdās, one of the most celebrated of the north Indian bhakti poets. Sūrdās was not concerned in merely describing events:

> but in evoking vivid scenes, in freezing forever the feelings of an instant - whether that of the moment of the infant Kṛṣṇa's first steps, or that of the attempts of Kṛṣṇa's mother Yashodā to wean him, or that of Kṛṣṇa's setting to his lips the bamboo flute that beguiles the hearts of the women of Braj. (1976, pp.4-5)

Indeed, if we hope to grasp something of the spiritual significance of the padas, it is necessary for us to realise that as far as the devotee is concerned they are not so much appreciated for their literary qualities as for the depth of emotional feeling which they are capable of arousing within the hearts of those who sing and hear them. During a performance, the kīrtanyā and his audience are supposed to experience anew those same rapturous emotions originally experienced by the Aṣṭachāp with the result that they find themselves thereby transported into the midst of līlā.

My own limited understanding of these padas derives from the many hours spent discussing their content with a temple kīrtanyā. Our attempts to translate them into English proved frustrating, partly because of my own imperfect knowledge of Braj Bhāṣā, but mainly because my teacher sought to convey to me those moods which were implied rather than manifest in the lyrics. He also stressed that his own particular

interpretations were purely personal and that others might feel very differently. One kīrtan which evokes a scene of Mother Yashodā coaxing her stubborn child to take a cup of milk was a particular favourite of his. First he would assume the stern but concerned facial expression of a mother, then he would sink low in his chair, wrinkling up his face and swiping at an imaginary cup, in an attempt to convey an impression of infantile obstinacy. The kīrtan is sung in the temple just before the last darshan of the day while Ṭhākurjī is being offered a bedtime drink of sweetened milk.

DŪDH KĀ PADA (rāga Kānharo)

Drink up your milk
Man Mohan my love

I'd do anything for you
so don't be so stubborn
O Lotus-Eyed Light of my Eyes

Come sip from this brimming golden cup
and make me happy,
and let your brother Balabhadra take some too

Paramānanda says, I'll fetch milk
first thing in the morning,
I promise

Depending on the kīrtan's theme, he would adopt the gestures and expressions of an anxious mother, a mischievous cowherd or a distraught milkmaid. The following pada is sung during the last darshan of the evening in the Rainy Season:

BARṢĀT KĀ PADA (rāga Megh-Malār)

My new sārī will get soaked

I'm wearing it for the very first time
my father Vṛṣabhān gave it to me

It's going to rain
wrap your shawl around my shoulders

O beautiful Shyāma
the colours will run and the patterns will spoil

What shall I say when I go home
O Mohan, I'm so frightened

Kumbhandās says, the Lord Govardhanadhara
was delighted and took her in his arms

The padas cover a wide variety of themes pertaining to the daily,

seasonal and festival life of Lord Krishna,[3] while each pada is assigned a particular melodic formula which is sympathetic to the mood conveyed by its lyrics. These formulae, known as rāgas, literally 'emotions', suit a vast number of moods and occasions. For example, Rāga Bhairava is normally sung in the morning, Rāga Bilāval in the evening, Rāga Sāraṅga in Spring and Rāga Malār in the Rainy Season. It is significant that like mantras, rāgas are attributed with special powers, or rather they bring special powers to those who recite them to perfection. Not only do they reflect moods and seasons, they also invoke them. As my kīrtan-teacher explained:

> Megh Malār is a very popular rāga of the Rainy Season. If a person sings this rāga beautifully and with all his heart, and if he has mastered the tune, then he can make it rain in Summer. A long time ago in the court of Holkar there was a kīrtanyā who sang this rāga in front of the king and it rained in the palace.

The ability to sing these rāgas in the correct classical mode is generally regarded as a special and admirable accomplishment. There are five men in Ujjain who regularly sing in the havelīs. Either they perform alone, or else in twos and threes, though never in unison. One will lead by singing a phrase which is then echoed by the other(s), and so on, until the end, after which the whole is repeated at a faster pace. A small pair of brass cymbals (maṅjīrā, jhāṅjha) no bigger than the palm of one's hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment, and sometimes, if musicians are present, a mṛdaṅga and harmonium are played.[4]

Shṛṅgār-sevā. Rāg-sevā and Shṛṅgār-sevā are regarded as complementary expressions of devotion: the one evokes the scene in words and music, the other portrays it in a visible and artistic form. The adornment of the image and the temporary scenes (jhānkīs) constructed in the deity's apartment are lavish, varied and show a meticulous attention to detail. Each temple keeps a large stock of clothes, ornaments and ritual props which are selected and combined according to the different līlās which

are to be recreated. Moreover, each and every article of shṛṅgār is thought to embody a particular devotional attitude (bhāvanā) which is determined according to the use to which it is put and which is conceptualised in terms of its alaukika equivalent in the divine līlā. I should stress here that the adornment of the deity is a particularly rich and complex area of study which deserves more attention than I can offer at present.[5] Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that the following outline will provide a useful prelude to the study of what is a distinctive and highly developed mode of devotional worship.

The Daily Routine (nitya-sevā)

There are normally seven or eight darshans a day when temple-goers are favoured with brief disclosures of the divine līlā.[6] Yet priests are occupied throughout the day in behind-the-scenes activities. For information concerning this concealed area of temple life I had to rely on accounts volunteered by priests. These could be compared with formal ritual procedures laid down in special Sampradāyik manuals.[7] The data obtained appear to support two general conclusions: first, that the priestly routine tends to follow a standard pattern throughout the Sampradāya with minor stylistic variations existing between the Seven Houses and among their respective sublineages: and second, that this pattern has changed little since the seventeenth century, or even since its inception by Viṭṭhalnāthjī. Rather than simply enumerate the principal stages of the daily round, I give a backstage view of priestly sevā based on a description given by a priest whom I refer to as Mukhiyājī. Mukhiyājī's words help to convey something of the personal flavour of svarūp-sevā.

1. Maṅgalā.[8] The deity is woken up and served light refreshments consisting of milk, curds, butter, dried fruits and sweetmeats. Ārati is performed. Bāl-bhāva is the appropriate devotional attitude at this

time: Mother Yashodā gently wakes her baby. In Winter the doors open early, between 5 and 6 a.m., and in Summer an hour or so later, usually after sunrise.[9]

Having assumed a condition of aparas as described in the previous chapter, Mukhiyājī enters the temple kitchens, fires a stove and leaves some sweetened milk to warm so that it will be ready for Ṭhākurjī as soon as he awakes. He approaches the side door of the nijmandir and performs daṅḍavat, lying full length on the floor. Then he sounds a conch shell, Shaṅkhanād,[10] and rings a handbell, Ghaṅṭānād.

> I ring Ghaṅṭānād three times.... The bhāvanā of Ghaṅṭānād is this: there are three kinds of cows living with Ṭhākurjī - rājas, tāmas and sāttvik. They wear bells round their necks which jingle as they begin to stir. In this way they rouse the entire household. I wake Ṭhākurjī by ringing Ghaṅṭānād in the same way that these three kinds of cows ring their bells. First, I ring in a sāttvik way (softly), then in a rājasik way (louder), and finally in a tāmasik way (loudly). So when the sāttvik bell rings, he stirs; when the rājasik bells rings, he turns over; and when the tāmasik bell rings, he wakes up completely. The sun is rising and our Kanhaiyā has to take the cows to graze in the jungle.[11]

Mukhiyājī may now unlock the door and enter the nijmandir. First of all he removes the bhog that has been left overnight in case Ṭhākurjī felt hungry. The containers must be washed and purified before they are replaced.[12] He sweeps the floor, wipes it with a wet cloth and afterwards with a dry cloth. In Winter he lights a stove (aṅgīṭhī) so that Ṭhākurjī will not catch a cold as he passes from his bed to his throne. While the nijmandir is being warmed, he has time to return to the kitchens in order to prepare breakfast.

> For Maṅgalā I prepare two nag (i.e. laḍḍū), milk, pūrīs, and, as it is Winter, five jalebīs. Sometimes when it is cold and misty I offer a pinch of saubhāgyasūṅṭha.[13] When the bhog is ready, I put it all on one tray and place it near to him. I warm my hands by the stove and put them near to his face. Then I clap three times to let him know that his breakfast is ready. I clap first because if I suddenly touched him he would be startled. I warm a blanket by the stove and wrap it round him from his chin to his feet so that he won't feel the cold.

Since not even Mukhiyājī may see Ṭhākurjī taking food, he leaves the

nijmandir for some fifteen to twenty minutes before returning to open the main doors for devotees to take darshan. He does ārati and closes the doors after about fifteen minutes. Now he has time to return to the kitchens in order to prepare rice, pulses and vegetables for the main meal of the day, making sure that he leaves some refreshments in the nijmandir in case Ṭhākurjī should feel peckish while he is away.

2. Shṛṅgār.[14] The deity is bathed,[15] applied with perfumes, dressed and offered a light snack[16] before being presented again to his admirers.

In Mukhiyājī's Gaddī Shṛṅgār is not open to the laity, though the routine is much the same as elsewhere:

> I bathe Ṭhākurjī and smear his body and garments with perfume... I warm his clothes by the stove - I make them all myself - and I say 'Come Ṭhākur, come and be dressed'. I place a flower garland round his neck and take darshan of Shṛṅgār alone.[17]

3. Gvāl. Gopāl takes the cows to the pastures with his cowherd companions (gvāla):

> He is going to the jungle so I give him those foods which he can take with him... lucaī, kharkharī and pickles... ginger pickles are best in the cold weather.[18] The darshan should last for seven minutes being the time Svāminījī takes to deliver Ṭhākurjī's snack.[19]

4. Rājbhog. The deity is offered a full meal of pulses, curry, wheat-cakes, pickles, rice pudding, sweets and fresh fruits, after which he takes pān to purify his mouth (mukha shuddhi). Some twenty minutes after eating, the doors are opened and ārati is performed. After Rājbhog, prasād of sliced fruits is distributed among those present.

During the afternoon (between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.) Ṭhākurjī takes a nap. Mukhiyājī leaves his sevā after making sure that the deity is comfortable and that certain refreshments and amusements are at hand should they be required:

> After Rājbhog I leave a long plank of wood between Ṭhākurjī's throne and his cot (in Shaiyā Ghar) so that he can easily pass back and forth. I also leave some sweets and set out a game of

caupada[20] on a stool. The interval between Rājbhog and Utthāpan is one of rest, so if Ṭhākurjī wishes to sleep on his cot he can reach it by means of the plank.

5. Utthāpan. The deity is roused from sleep in the same way that he was in the morning and offered a snack of fresh fruits (phalaphūl-bhog):

> I place phalaphūl-bhog in a chāb (a kind of wicker basket). This is because Ṭhākurjī is in the jungle at this time so he cannot obtain metal plates. I put leaves in the chāb and serve the bhog. When a baby rises after sleeping he feels very hungry, so Ṭhākurjī's friends hurriedly fetch fruit for him.

6. Bhog. Another light snack is served about an hour after Utthāpan:

> During Bhog I place three tables in front of Ṭhākurjī. On the middle table there is a cloth of printed squares with a cow at each corner. This is to show that it is time to go home from the pastures because the cows are gathering. On the other two tables I place bhog, some sweets and savouries, all in donās (leaf cups). In the morning Mother Yashodā had wrapped this food in a cloth so that he could take a snack whenever he felt hungry.

7. Sandhya-Ārati. The deity returns from the pastures and ārati is performed at twilight (sandhya):

> I perform ārati immediately after he has returned from the jungle because Yashodā has been waiting since early morning and she is longing to embrace her little boy. Ārati therefore shows Yashodā's love. It is done very quickly.[21] After this darshan I check to see that his dress is tidy. I have to wipe the dust from his body because he has been out in the jungle all day. I wash his face and dress him in some loose-fitting clothes and a garland.

8. Shayan. The deity is served his second full meal of the day. Darshan is taken just before he is put to bed:

> Darshan is left open for about fifteen minutes, but not too long. Ṭhākurjī has taken food and milk and feels tired. When I see that he wishes to go to sleep, I perform ārati, ringing a bell softly. If I should ring it noisily he would not feel drowsy. I close the doors and see that the Vaiṣṇavas get their prasād. Then I undress him. During the Winter he wears a cotton shirt called an ātmasukh so that he won't feel the cold in the morning. I place a sheet and two blankets over him and leave a jhārī, pān, flowers, and some sweets.

Having completed his daily duties, Mukhiyājī bows to Ṭhākurjī one last time, puts the valuables in the safe, locks the doors of the nijmandir, and leaves his sevā.

Seasonal and Festival Sevā (ṛtu-sevā/utsav-sevā)

The sect follows the traditional Hindu calendar which is based on the lunar day (tithi) with approximately thirty days to a lunar month and twelve lunar months to a year. The lunar months are as follows:

Caitra (March/April)	Āshvin (September/October)
Vaishākh (April/May)	Kārttik (October/November)
Jyeṣṭh (May/June)	Mārgashīrṣa (November/December)
Aṣāḍh (June/July)	Pauṣa (December/January)
Shrāvaṇ (July/August)	Māgh (January/February)
Bhādrapad (August/September)	Phālgun (February/March)

Each month is divided into two sections (pakṣa) of about fifteen days each such that the first 'fortnight' begins with the full moon (pūrnimā) and is known as Kṛṣṇapakṣa, the Dark Half, while the second 'fortnight' begins with the new moon (amāvasyā) and is known as Shuklapakṣa, or the Light Half. There are six seasons (ṛtu) each lasting for about two months. They are Basaṅt (Spring), Uṣṇakāl (Summer), Barṣāt (Rains), Sharad (Autumn), Hemaṅt (Winter) and Shishira (Cool season). Since the twelve lunar months only make up about 354 days, a leap-month is added every third year to resolve the discrepancy between the lunar and solar years. This leap-month follows either Aṣāḍh or Shrāvaṇ and is known familiarly as Adhīk Mās (lit., 'Extra Month') or Puruṣottama Mās (after the Supreme Lord). It is considered to be a particularly sacred and auspicious period being ritually equivalent to a full year. For this reason, Puṣṭimārgis attempt to celebrate all of the important festivals of the year within this one month.

In August 1977 I was present in Ujjain at the time of Adhīk Mās when I was fortunate enough to observe the elaborate scenes (jhāṅkīs) of the Krishna līlā which were constructed in the havelīs nearly every day.

The dates of fasts[22] and festivals are published annually in 'diaries' called ṭippanī which can be obtained from most havelīs in return for a small donation. Each Gaddī produces its own ṭippanī, and each ṭippanī

contains additional details of special traditions specifically associated with the Gaddī it represents (i.e. the birthdays of its own Mahārājas). In addition, the Sevā-Pranālī give more precise information regarding festival shṛngār and bhog.

I now give an outline of some of the more important sectarian festivals observed in the havelīs beginning with the Spring season during which the New Year of the Vikram Samvat Era is celebrated.

BASAṆT (Spring)

Māgh shukla 5 Basaṅt Paṅcamī (Spring Fifth)

During the month of Māgh (January/February) the days gradually get warmer until Basaṅt Paṅcamī heralds the Spring. After the first darshan of the morning. Ṭhākurjī is bathed and anointed (abhyaṅg),[23] then dressed in a long white cotton robe (vāgā)[24] and a white cap (kulaha) or turban (pāg) surmounted by a coronet (candrikā).[25] From today onwards the last darshan of the evening, which had hitherto remained closed to all except the priests for the Winter months, is now re-opened. During this and the days that follow the Spring festival of Holī is eagerly anticipated: the priest splashes red dye on a white cotton screen (pichvāī)[26] that hangs behind the throne; a pot of dye and a syringe are left nearby so that Ṭhākurjī can play Holī; and the kīrtanyās sing padas describing the playful dye-throwing exploits of Krishna and his friends. The festivities continue throughout the following month of Phālgun (February/March) reaching a climax on the last day, Holī-day proper, when the havelīs are a riot of bright colours and high emotions.

Caitra krsna 1 Ḍolotsav (Swing Festival)

The day following Holī-day a large grotto of mango branches and plantain leaves is erected just outside the nijmandir. Inside this grotto a swing (ḍol) is suspended, the seat and supports of which are lavishly draped with hundreds of Spring flower buds intricately arranged according

to size and colour. After Rājbhog darshan, a small Krishna svarūp is seated on the swing and pushed to-and-fro by the priests. Later the priest throws coloured dye over the assembled worshippers in celebration of the joys of Holī.

Caitra shukla 1 Nav-Varsa (New Year)

The New Year is celebrated a fortnight after Holī. Ṭhākurjī is bathed (abhyaṅg) and dressed in full shṛṅgār of red cotton garments decorated with patterns of gold and silver print. They include loose-fitting 'trousers' (sūthan), a waistcoat of sorts (colī), a long robe (vāgā), and a kulaha with candrikā adorned by five peacock plumes. In addition, Ṭhākurjī wears festival ornaments, including ear-rings, bracelets and several necklaces.[27]

Caitra shukla 9 Rām Navamī (Ram Ninth)

The birthday of Lord Rām, the seventh avatāra of Vishnu, is considered important enough to warrant full shṛṅgār including kulaha with peacock plumes (morpaṅkha). On this occasion, as on the birthdays of other principal avatāras, Ṭhākurjī wears saffron-coloured (i.e. auspicious) garments and special festival bhog is offered and later distributed as prasād.

Vaishākh Krsna 11 Shrī Mahāprabhujī ko Utsav

One of the principal Puṣṭimārgi festivals celebrates the birth of Vallabhācārya from a fiery kund in a forest near Campāraṇya in central India (see Chapter III,pp.90-91). Again Ṭhākurjī is dressed in full saffron shṛṅgār as for the birthdays of the avatāras of Vishnu. Since I was able to witness first-hand the Quingentenary birthday celebrations of Vallabhācārya in May 1978, I shall give here a brief resume of events in Ujjain. The festival is significant in that it links-up all five Puṣṭimārgi temples in Ujjain.

At about 6 a.m. (May 3rd.) some sixty Vaiṣṇavas attended Maṅgalā

darshan at Shrī Madan Mohanjī kī Havelī (Temple B) after which they gathered in the narrow street outside ready to make a tour of all the Vallabha havelīs in the city known as Prabhāt Pherī (lit., 'Dawn Circuit'). A group of young boys competed for the honour of carrying the Puṣṭimārgi pennant at the head of the procession.[28] Saffron-coloured caps were distributed among the men and boys. A manager of Temple B led the way singing a kīrtan describing the miraculous birth, pausing after each phrase to allow the rest to repeat it. Occasionally he was interrupted by the cry 'What day is it today?' and the rejoinder 'Vallabha's Birthday!'. The women brought up the rear of the procession while singing their own devotional songs (bhajanas).

The slow meandering procession took nearly an hour to reach Shrī Govardhannāthjī kī Havelī (Temple E) in time for Maṅgalā darshan, moving on to Shrī Nāthjī kī Havelī (Temple C) and terminating at Shrī Puruṣottamajī kī Havelī (Temple D) for the last darshan at about 9 a.m. By this time I counted nearly one hundred participants.

On the evening of the same day a much larger group of devotees gathered at Shrī Nāthji Havelī to form another procession which was to wind through the main bazars of the city eventually ending up at Shrī Mahāprabhujī kī Baiṭhak (Temple A). This procession included two horse-drawn carriages, two bullock carts (one containing a large portrait of Vallabhācārya), followed by an elephant bearing a portrait of Shrī Nathjī. A hired band followed behind playing a medley of popular film songs. This procession, known as Shobhā Yātrā, finally reached the Baiṭhak at about 10 p.m. Having first taken darshan of the guru's throne, about six hundred men, women and children took their places on the roof for a prasād feast which included boiled rice, curry, wheatcakes, boiled pulses, sweetmeats and savouries.

Celebrations continued for five days. Bāl Krishna was rocked in a cradle (pālnā) and worshipped in a bower decorated with flowers

(phūlmandalī). He was also offered bhog of panā, a syrup extracted from mangos and water melons and flavoured with sugar and cardamom seeds. This 'cooling' bhog is popular as the Summer approaches.

USNAKĀL (Summer)

Vaishākh shukla 3 Aksay Trtīyā (Eternal Third)

Akṣay Tṛtīyā marks the beginning of Summer. On this day and throughout the hot Summer months the utmost care is taken to keep Ṭhākurjī as cool and comfortable as possible. A water fountain is placed before the nijmandir, screens of khaskhas are sprayed with water and fitted over the doors and windows,[29] and a large fan (paṅkhā) is hung above the throne and manipulated during darshan periods by means of a string. Having bathed the deity, the priest applies sandalwood paste (i.e. a 'cooling' substance) to the feet, hands and chest, and dresses it in loose-fitting muslin garments including a white or saffron-coloured loincloth (pichaurā),[30] a white kulaha or pāg and a coronet of peacock feathers. Diamonds and ornaments of gold are now unsuitable for they give rise to heat in the body; pearls and silver are worn instead for they are considered to have cooling properties. Various kinds of cooling foods (shītal-bhog) are specially prepared including certain kinds of boiled pulses (satuā, mūṅg, and canā) and the sweetened juice of ripe mangos and water melons (panā).

Vaishākh shukla 14 Nṛsiṅha Jayantī (Nṛsiṅha's Birthday)

The birthday of Nṛsiṅha, the Man-Lion, like that of Lord Rām mentioned above, is celebrated with festival shṛṅgār of saffron colour including pichaurā, kulaha and morpaṅkha. Ṭhākurjī also wears a special lion-claw necklace. The main event is the bathing of the small stone known as Shrī Shālagrāmjī in the five sacred substances of milk, curd, sugar, honey and ghee (pañcāmṛta-snān). The shālagrām or shāligrām is sacred to Vaiṣnavas in general as an embodiment of Lord Vishnu, and, as such, is easily identified with Nṛsiṅha avatāra. But it is clear that many Puṣṭimārgis

regard the stone as an essential form of Lord Krishna. As one priest explained:

> Ṭhākurjī is too big for pañcāmṛta-snān so we bathe Shāligrāmjī as a svarūp of Shrī Krishna.

I describe this ritual as observed in Temple B.

Just after 7 p.m. the mukhiyā drew aside a curtain to reveal Ṭhākurjī wearing a peacock coronet and saffron shṛṅgār. This was the cue for several members of the congregation to begin ringing bells and blowing conch shells, a clangour that was to accompany the whole ritual. Set on a low stool before the throne was a round stainless steel tray in the middle of which was a small black stone (no more than three inches long) on a saffron cloth. The mukhiyā sat cross-legged facing Shālagrāmjī with Ṭhākurjī to his left. Several containers had already been laid on another stool just to his left. He dipped a silver needle into some vermilion powder and applied a tilak to the stone along with a few rice grains and tulasi leaves. He also offered two packets of pān. The bathing commenced when the mukhiyā poured some milk into a conch shell (held in the right hand) and poured the contents over the stone. He repeated the process several times using milk, curd, ghee, finely ground sugar, honey, saffron-tinted water, and finally clear water. He lifted the stone from the tray, dipped it in sugar, washed it in milk, in water, wrapped it in an orange cloth and placed it beside Ṭhākurjī on the throne. Then he applied vermilion tilaks to Ṭhākurjī and Shālagrāmjī, adorned them both with flower garlands, and offered pān and coconuts. Afterwards, prasād of pañcāmṛta (the contents of the steel tray) was passed among all those present. The same ritual was observed in Temple D some fifteen minutes later. At the nearby temple of Nṛsiṁha Bhagavān there was a procession in honour of the deity during which a man donned a lion's head and charged up and down the street three times borne on the shoulders of two friends.

Jyesṭh Phūlmaṇḍalī and Caṅdan Colī

During the months of Jyesṭh (May/June) and Āsāḍh (June/July) the heat becomes oppressive. Devotees, either as individuals or in small groups, choose to sponsor special darshans known as manorathas with the specific intention of alleviating any discomfort felt by the deity. One such darshan is known as Phūlshṛṅgār and Phūlmaṇḍalī during which Ṭhākurjī is dressed in garments, ornaments and jewels exquisitely wrought from the buds of pale-coloured flowers such as mālati, gulāb and mogarā (white jasmine flowers). Ṭhākurjī sits in a bower (phūlmaṇḍalī) of equally exquisite construction. Devotees of Phūlghar work for hours threading the buds onto strings according to a precise arrangement of colour and size. As many as ten kilogrammes of buds may be required for a single darshan. Later the priests apply the many strings of buds to the deity. One cannot but admire the consummate skill and patience of those priests and lay-volunteers who practise such a lovely yet transient art.

Another manoratha of the Hot Season is Caṅdan Colī. Sandalwood (caṅdan), which is valued for its cooling properties, is ground down with water to a smooth paste and applied to Ṭhākurjī's body in such a way that he appears to be wearing a short pair of breeches reaching to the knees (jaṅghiyā or pardhanī) and a short bodice with sleeves reaching to the elbows (colī). At other times the sandalwood paste is applied in such a way that it seems as if he is wearing a pichaurā. I was assured by one priest that it requires much skill and experience to apply sandalwood in this manner.[31]

Also in the month of Jyesṭh are festivals in honour of the rivers Yamunā (kṛṣṇa 10) and Ganges (shukla 10) when the area in the temple known as Kamal Cauk is flooded. One darshan, Nāv Līlā is particularly outstanding. In Temple C a large rectangular tank about twenty feet long and eight feet wide was built of bricks and mortar specially for the occasion, and demolished after a few days. This tank was filled with water and profusely

decorated with flower blossoms and overhanging trees. A large model boat decked in flowers and containing a Krishna svarūp was pushed through the water by a priest wading thigh-deep while models of gopīs and cows looked on from the river banks. A kīrtanyā who had performed during this darshan later described the scene to me:

> Lord Krishna was taking pleasure in sailing his boat on the Yamunā when a gopī called from the bank 'Please O please ferry me across the river in your boat.' Lord Krishna teased 'Look! The bank isn't safe. If you attempt to board my boat you may slip into the water.' But she was not to be dissuaded. 'Please take my hand,' she pleaded. So Lord Krishna caught her by the hand and ferried her across the Yamunā.

Jyesth shukla 15 Snān Yātrā

Jyeṣṭh pūrṇimā (May/June) is the only day in the year when Ṭhākurjī is bathed and anointed in full view of his worshippers. King Nand of Braj performs the rājyābhiṣekha (the ceremony of anointment and coronation) of his son and heir. The previous evening the mukhiyā had heated a large copper water pot (haṅḍā) in fire for purposes of purification and carried it to the river Shipra where he bathed, filled the pot with Shipra water, and carried it back to the temple. A drop of Yamunā water is normally added to the contents of the haṅḍā such that the latter also becomes Yamunā water. The abhiṣekha begins early the following morning just after Maṅgalā (between 6 and 7 a.m.) when Ṭhākurjī, dressed only in a pichaurā, is bathed by the mukhiyā, who stands on a stool and receives bowls of the Yamunā water from his assistant which he pours over the deity's head. Meanwhile, a bell is rung continuously and a conch shell sounded. A group of Brahmans sits in Ḍol Tivārī chanting mantras. When I observed this event in Temple C there were about two hundred and fifty worshippers present at one time and many coming and going.

BARSĀT (Rains)

Āsādh shukla 2 Rath Yātrā (Car Festival)

The festival of Rath Yātrā marks the end of the Summer and the beginning

of the Rainy Season which brings welcome relief from the sultry heat. After today, the screens of khaskhas are removed from the doors and windows of the nijmandir and the use of the fan and the water fountain is discontinued. During the early mornings and late evenings Ṭhākurjī will now wear a shawl (uparṇā).

It is said that Viṭṭhalnāthjī visited the temple of Shrī Jagannāth at Purī in 1559 AD where he was deeply moved by the famous Car Festival. On returning to Braj he had a similar vehicle constructed and led the deity in procession through the streets. Since that time the festival of Rath Yātrā has been observed every year in all Vallabha temples. After Maṅgalā at about 6 a.m. the deity is bathed (abhyaṅg) and dressed in regal shṛṅgār of white garments embellished with mirrors, jewels and gold brocade. A small svarūp sits in a chariot (rath) in Ḍol Tivārī drawn by two wooden horses with wheels attached to their hooves. Occasionally the mukhiyā pushes the chariot back and forth.

Special bhog is prepared for the occasion, including bīj ke laḍḍū, a sweetmeat prepared from melon seeds, varieties of panā, and aṅkurī, the seeds of mūṅg dāl which have been soaked in water and have just begun to germinate. The latter especially is associated with the coming of the monsoon. At this time every year a large feast is held at the Baiṭhak.

Shrāvaṇ Hiṅḍolā (Swing)

Shrāvaṇ (July/August) is a month of jubilant celebrations, being associated with the coming of the life-giving rains and scenes of natural abundance. Throughout the month Bāl Krishna is rocked in a swing (hiṅḍolā) that is lavishly embroidered with flowers. There are numerous descriptive kīrtans which accompany the darshans, the following being an example of one heard several times during Sandhya-Ārati and Shayan.

Hiṅḍolā ke Pada (Rāg-Rāyso)

A swing adorned with flowers
stands by Nanda's door

Maidens throng to see
Nanda's son swinging

The lovely Rainy Season
comes in the month of Shrāvan

Frogs croak and peacocks boom
nearby the melodious cuckoo sings

Both supports, four spindles and seat
are wreathed in flowers

Rādhā and her friends come to
push the swing

Their hearts are swelling with
unfathomable love

Lalitā comes too, it is a scene of
indescribable and unending joy

Seeing this scene, Caturbhuj is ready
to surrender himself to Lord Giridharana

Shrāvan krsna 30 Hariyālī Amāvasyā

During the Rains, the countryside becomes lush and green (hariyālī). On the day of the new moon (amāvasyā) Ṭhākurjī is adorned entirely in green, including green turban (pāg), loincloth (pichaurā), screen (pichvāī), throne (gādī), bolsters (takiye) and emeralds (pannā). The smaller svarūp is rocked in a swing entwined with sandal leaves and jasmine twigs. Green vegetables and sweets rendered green by the addition of vegetable dyes are offered as bhog.[32]

Shrāvan shukla 5 Nāg-Paṅcamī (Snake Fifth)

This is the day when snakes are worshipped. The festival is of special significance in Vallabha Sampradāya because it occurs on the same day that Shrī Nāthjī's arm was discovered on Govardhan Mountain. Ṭhākurjī wears dark-coloured shṛṅgār (especially purple), and, if available, a pichvāī depicting the discovery of Shrī Nāthjī by the cowherds of Braj is hung behind the throne.

Shrāvan shukla 11 Pavitrā Ekādashī (Pure Eleventh)

This occasion celebrates the inception of the Path of Grace when Shrī Krishna appeared before Vallabhācārya at midnight in Gokul and communicated to him the Brahmasambandha mantra by which human souls can be cleansed of

their impurities as a prelude to reconciliation with Krishna. The deity is dressed in white and gold shṛṅgār with an elaborate head-dress consisting of a kulaha and five peacock plumes (or even a mukuṭ) and festival ornaments.

Shrāvaṇ shukla 15 Rakṣābaṅdhan (Charm Tying)

Rakṣābaṅdhan or Rakhī is a popular Hindu festival during which sisters tie string bracelets around their brothers' wrists thereby reminding the latter of their lifelong obligation to tend to their sisters' welfare. Ṭhākurjī is dressed in fesvital shṛṅgār including a red pichaurā, a red kulaha or pāg and a candrikā of five plumes. The mukhiyā applies a vermilion tilak and rice grains (akṣat) to the deity's brow and ties rakhī to the deity's wrist. A priest's son explained:

> Mukhiyājī ties rakhī thinking that he is Ṭhākurjī's sister... or with the bhāva of Yashodājī.... I mean if his sister isn't at home she could send rakhī by post...so Yashodājī could tie it on her behalf.

From Rākhi until Janmāṣṭamī Ṭhākurjī is given toys to play with and the kīrtanyās begin to sing padas on the theme of Krishna's nativity.

Bhādrapad kṛṣṇa 8 Janmāṣṭamī (Krishna's Birthday)

A midnight darshan reveals the new-born babe lavishly dressed in a saffron vāgā, saffron kulaha with peacock plumes, several rows of necklaces, and framed by a saffron pichvāī. The worshippers break their fast as large amounts of prasād sweetmeats are distributed.[33] On the following morning large crowds gather in the havelīs for another special darshan known as Nand Mahotsav. A priest dons the rustic garb of Krishna's foster-father and plays with toys before the image. Another priest dresses up as Mother Yashodā and rocks a small svarūp of Krishna in a cradle (pālnā), occasionally trying to attract the baby's attention by shaking a toy rattle. In one temple I noticed that the mukhiyā had deliberately shaven off his beard and moustache in order to assume the role. Later, Nand Bābā throws a yellow liquid of water mixed with curd and turmeric over the congregation and the men share in the joy of the cowherds of Braj by joining hands and

dancing in a ring.

Bhādrapad shukla 11 Dān Ekādashī (Toll Eleventh)

This is a recreation of dān-līlā, a well-known episode often depicted in Rājasthānī paintings. Some gopīs are taking butter to the market when they are accosted by Krishna and his friends on a narrow mountain path. The cowherd demands a toll (dān) of butter before allowing them to pass. He snatches at the corner of a gopī's sārī, she starts, and butter spills from the pot on her head. The scene is depicted in the havelīs using large wooden models of gopīs, cowherds and Lord Krishna. Ṭhākurjī wears a crown (mukuṭ) studded with jewels, a red silk shawl (pītāmbara) and a flared skirt (kāchanī).

Bhādrapad shukla 12 Vāman Dvādashī (Vāman Twelfth)

As with the birthdays of other avatāras of Vishnu, the birthday of the Dwarf, Vāman, is acknowledged by dressing Ṭhākurjī in saffron shṛṅgār and performing pañcāmṛta-snān of Shālagrāmjī or a small svarūp.

During the days that follow, the priests create attractive displays using an artistic technique known as sāṅjhī. A large wooden board is placed beside the image and covered with a white cloth. Pictures of the līlās are made by carefully and adroitly sprinkling different coloured powders onto the cloth. In this way eight different scenes are created in eight days. On the ninth day I observed sāṅjhī of a different kind. A large copper dish is filled with water and a fine white powder is sieved through muslin cloth so that it floats on the surface. Brightly coloured powders are then deftly applied so as to form an attractive quivering picture.

SHARAD (Autumn)

Āshvin shukla 1 Navrātri (Nine Nights)

After the Rainy Season, the nights begin to get cooler. Whereas

Ṭhākurjī had only worn a shawl (uparṇā) and loincloth (pichaurā) during Maṅgalā and Shayan, he now wears a long coat (aṅgarkhā) over 'trousers' (sūthan). Sometimes during the daytime he wears a long robe (vāgā) again. The 'Nine Nights' are normally associated with the worship of Lord Shiva and the Mother Goddess, but in Puṣṭimārga they refer to the nine nights of amorous sport (Nav Vilās) in the woods around Vṛndāvan where Krishna plays on his flute in the moonlight and charms the gopīs.

Āshvin shukla 15 Mahārās/Sharad Pūrṇimā (Autumn Full Moon)

When the Autumn moon is full, then Rās Līlā begins. Krishna makes himself many and partners each and every gopī in the great Round-Dance (Mahārās). Ṭhākurjī wears magnificent shṛṅgār including a kāchanī embroidered with golden thread, saffron or red sūthan, a red silk pītāmbara, diamond ornaments, and a diamond studded mukuṭ with peacock plumes.

Kārttik shukla 1 Annakūṭ (The Mountain of Food)

The day following the festival of Divālī is Annakūṭ which celebrates Krishna's subjugation of Indra. Annakūṭ is a principal Puṣṭimārgi festival and will be described and discussed in detail in Chapter VIII.

Hemaṅt and Shishira (Winter and Cool Season)

During the months of Mārgashīrṣa, Pauṣa and Māgh (November-January) there is no Shayan darshan. A stove is placed in the nijmandir, 'heating' foods are prepared daily, and great care is taken to protect Ṭhākurjī from the cold weather. There are few important festivals at this time save for the birthday celebrations of prominent Mahārājas belonging to Vallabha-Kula.

Pauṣa kṛṣṇa 9 Shrī Gusainjī ka Utsav

This is the birthday of Vallabha's youngest son, Viṭṭhalnāthjī, who is acknowledged by sectaries as the originator of the distinctive forms of sevā that are still followed in the havelīs today. As a special treat Ṭhākurjī is offered sweetmeats known as jalebīs which are considered to be particularly

beneficial at this time of the year by virtue of their 'heating' properties.

Towards the end of Māgh (February) and during the early days of Caitra (March), Winter gradually gives way to Spring and the return of the boisterous Spring Festival of Holī.

The Divine Drama

I have already referred to the emotional attitude of devotion called bhāva on several occasions. If we are to understand the physical form of temple sevā it is essential that we grasp more fully the meaning and implications of this key concept. In Chapter IV I listed the four principal devotional attitudes which the devotee decides to assume with regard to Lord Krishna: that of a servant (dāsya-bhāva), friend (sakhya-bhāva), lover (mādhura-bhāva), or parent (vātsalya-bhāva). Of these the servant role is considered to be rather formal and impersonal. The devotee prefers to emulate the devotional feelings experienced by Krishna's cowherd companions, his foster parents and the loving and lovelorn gopīs. The Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal recognise the same devotional attitudes, laying particular stress on gopī love (Dimock, 1966:23). The Vaiṣṇavas of Vallabha Sampradāya have cultivated the devotional attitude of parental love and affection more than any other bhakti sect. The treatment of the Krishna image as a young child, though not wholly peculiar to Puṣṭimārga, is still, nonetheless, one of its most conspicuous and distinctive features.

Moreover, in the previous chapter I explained how the devotee, by assuming an appropriate devotional attitude, is supposed to perceive the temple as Nand Bābā's home in the celestial land of Braj. Every room and courtyard can be identified with reference to the sacred geography of Braj, the ground upon which Krishna treads his eternal līlā. During the darshan the onlooker is so moved by what he sees that he temporarily forgets himself and assumes the role of an actual participant in the divine play. The

role-other, the Krishna image, is considered to be a living and breathing person. 'He' is a repository of the emotions of those who regard Him as such. The svarūp exists within the bhāva of the devotee.

It is easy to slip into a habit of using theatrical metaphors when describing Puṣṭimārgi temple worship. I have portrayed the havelī as a stage where Krishna acts out his divine drama and where temple-goers play out their different parts as playmates, parents and lovers. Sometimes, as on the occasion of Nand Mahotsav, the 'role-playing' is developed to the extent that the priests dress up as Father Nand and Mother Yashodā and devotees regard themselves as cowherds. Krishna, priests and devotees participate in the indescribable bliss (ānanda) generated by the occasion. The theatrical resemblances go further. There are eight daily performances when the principal player, dressed in an appropriate costume and surrounded by stage props and scenery, acts out each scene before an admiring audience. There is even a musical accompaniment.

A leading scholar and a devotee of Puṣṭimārga, M.T. Telivala, has taken exception to Bhandarkar's comment that Vallabha's mode of worship (sevāprakār) is more dramatic than emotional. Presumably Telivala understood this to be an insinuation that sevā constituted an elaborate yet spiritually inane performance rather than a spontaneous and heartfelt expression of loving devotion. On the contrary, Telivala points out, the sevāprakār

> ...was modelled to develop the finer sentiments of the human heart, and to term it dramatic would certainly do injustice to the great Ācharya. Experience has proved that by following this Sevāprakāra the devotees not only forgot the bonds of Sansāra, but it helped them in feeling the living presence of the deity (see Telivala, in Jhaveri, 1928).

I have no wish to continue this debate as such, save to repeat that all really depends on the attitude of the worshipper, and also, for that matter, of the onlooker. The difference is mainly one of real sevā and feigned sevā. What I do want to suggest is that Puṣṭimārgi sevā and the concept of bhāva as used in bhakti have their origins in classical Sanskrit

poetic theory. But this is in no way a denigration of Puṣṭimārgi worship as we shall see.

According to classical theory a work of art, let us say a dance-drama, should arouse in each and every member of the audience a particular 'dominant emotion' (sthāyi-bhāva), of which there are eight altogether, or for some theorists nine, including love, mirth, sorrow, anger, energy, fear, disgust, wonder, and self-disparagement. Each of these emotional states is enhanced through appropriate 'excitants' (vibhāvas), which are capable of inducing the experience of the 'dominant emotion', 'ensuants' (anubhāvas), which allow the 'dominant emotion' to be sensed, and 'accessories' (vyābhicāri-bhāvas), which serve to re-charge the 'dominant emotion'. The aim of the dance-drama is to induce the appropriate emotional state, the sthāyi-bhāva, in the minds of the audience and to raise it to the level of a corresponding sentiment or flavour known as rasa through a judicious inter-blending of suitable 'excitants', 'ensuants' and 'accessories'. The eight, or nine, corresponding rasas are the erotic, comic, pathetic, furious, heroic, terrible, disgustful, marvellous and quietistic.

The technicalities of Sanskrit poetics are highly complex and need delay us no further, save to point out that the notion of rasa, and of lasting rasa, is sometimes described as resembling the experience of divine bliss (ānanda) or even liberation (mokṣa, - see De, 1963:69). Take for instance the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal for whom

> ...religious devotion, bhakti, is such a state of rasa: the sense and the mind of the worshipper are absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, that personification of rasa, in the most intense experience possible for man. (Dimock, 1966:22)

Rasa, the concept of secular poetics, is transformed into the spiritual bhaktirasa. The different devotional attitudes towards Krishna experienced by the lover, parent and playmate are the 'dominant emotions', which, through the addition of the appropriate 'excitants', 'ensuants' and 'accessories' ultimately enable the devotee to taste the rasa of selfless

and overwhelming love (prem) for Krishna. Unlike the rasa of poetic theory, bhaktirasa can be permanent and real. By cultivating the role of friend, parent or gopī, the devotee eventually assumes one or another identity as a permanent participant in the eternal līlā, the divine drama.

In Bengal Vaishnavism mādhura-bhāva, the love of the gopīs, is the sthāyi-bhāva, and the kīrtan is the chief medium for its expression and inducement, raising it ultimately to the experience of bhaktirasa. Participants are often described as being in a state of 'seizure' or 'possession' as they identify themselves with the gopīs, experiencing their ecstatic frenzies of love for the beautiful cowherd (Kinsley, 1979:178). In Puṣṭimārga vātsālya-bhāva is the chief, though not the only, sthāyi-bhāva, and the kīrtan is also an important medium of its expression. But what is so remarkable about Puṣṭimārgi devotional worship is that the kīrtan is just one of a wide range of media utilised for the expression and enhancement of bhaktibhāva. In svarūp-sevā, the devotee is required to put all and everything, mind, body and wealth, into the service of the deity with the sole object of pleasing the deity. This involves the appropriation of everything that he or she considers beautiful and pleasing to the mind and senses, such as music, flowers, perfumes, paintings, garments, ornaments, jewels, tasty foods, and so on, with the result that Puṣṭimārgi temple worship tends to be palpably and impressively luxurious. This sevā is meant to be purely altruistic: the sevak exults in the knowledge that he is making Krishna happy. It should also be performed through one's own efforts. As one priest explained:

> Ṭhākurjī's happiness (ānanda) is also our happiness and it is an alaukika feeling. We should dedicate our entire lives to doing sevā. The more sevā we accomplish by our own efforts, the greater our happiness. We should never let others do our sevā in our place.

Consistent with Sanskrit poetic theory, the decorative, culinary, and musical techniques of svarūp-sevā are the stimuli that are arranged and blended in ways that are designed to excite the 'dominant emotion' of

loving devotion in the hearts of participants ultimately raising it to the experience of bhaktirasa. Hence, the many ritual items, acts and procedures of bhog, shṛṅgār and rāga-sevā are specially selected to be in perfect sympathy with each other, with the time of day, the season, and the mood of the līlā episode that is being recreated. Furthermore, if the devotee is to experience the loving intimate concern of a Mother Yashodā or a gopī, then his concern must be real and heartfelt. In the section on nitya-sevā, the priest's account of his daily routine allowed us a vivid insight into the real care taken to ensure that Ṭhākurjī is comfortable, that he does not feel the cold, or is not startled when waking, or has food at hand should he feel hungry, and games to amuse him if he does not wish to take an afternoon siesta. All is precise down to the smallest detail: there are no metal plates available in the jungle so Ṭhākurjī eats his packed lunch from leaf cups and wicker baskets, receptacles that are easily made from natural materials found close at hand.

Also consistent with Sanskrit poetic theory is the belief that nothing should be allowed to disturb the harmony of the scene for this might impair the emotional attitude of the onlooker. Bhāva should be always unadulterated. Anything which threatens to induce an unwanted or inappropriate emotional response should be avoided. For example, it is customary to celebrate the birthdays of deceased Mahārājas by dressing the temple deity in an elaborate head-dress consisting of a cap (kulaha) and coronet (candrikā) or crown (mukuṭ). Alternatively, the birthdays of living Mahārājas are celebrated by dressing the deity in a less elaborate form of head ornamentation comprising a ṭipārā and seharā, that is with the exception of the Gaddī of Mathureshjī (Temple B in Ujjain) where the practice was discontinued after one such occasion when a Mahārāja of the Gaddī died on his birthday. I was told that to adorn Ṭhākurjī with a seharā and ṭipārā at such times might cause 'bad feelings' (presumably grief and melancholy) to arise in the minds of worshippers thereby tainting the correct devotional response of

joy at the appearance on earth of an avatāra of Lord Krishna. Similarly, if a priest or sevak while performing sevā allows his (or her) mind to wander from the task in hand, if he becomes angry or fills his mind with laukika domestic worries, then his efforts will be in vain causing unnecessary worry for Ṭhākurjī who shares in the emotions of his devotees. He should therefore leave his sevā immediately and take a purificatory bath before resuming his duties. His emotional orientation to sevā must be absolutely pure (shuddha-bhāva). In fact, the attitude of the sevak matters above all else. A priest explained to me that if a devotee makes a mistake in his sevā, say that he burns Ṭhākurjī's dinner, then he is obliged to prepare the meal again. But if he makes a mistake and is not aware of the fact, Ṭhākurjī will happily forgive him and accept the offering. Indeed, it may be that the consecrated remains taste better than if a mistake had not been made. Following this same line of thought it was often said to me that the greater the bhāva of the sevak, the more beautiful and moving are the results of his sevā. A priest who has profound bhāva will excel in the art of floral decorations.

I suggested earlier that each and every article of shṛṅgār, and here I would include every individual act of sevā, is sanctified as a result of its utilisation in the service of the deity and is also regarded as embodying a particular emotion (bhāvanā) which is one of the 'dominant emotions' of of bhakti. In this way each item of sevā can serve as a kind of stimulus capable of arousing one or another 'dominant emotion' in the sevak. Our priest's-eye view of daily sevā revealed some of these bhāvanās; for instance, those associated with the handbell (Ghaṅṭānad) and conch shell (Shaṅkānad), and that of Yashodā's love expressed in the act of performing ārati. What is particularly interesting is the notion that the dominant emotions of mādhura-bhāva and vātsalya-bhāva, the love of Yashodā and the love of Svāminījī and the gopīs, as experienced by devotees, become established in the paraphernalia of sevā. There is some considerable leeway for

personal invention here. I have already noted that the throne (simhāsan) upon which Ṭhākurjī sits reminds one of the lap of Yashodā or the lap of Shrī Svāminījī. Furthermore, the buds in the flower garland worn at Rājbhog are the hearts of the gopīs; the pān offered to Ṭhākurjī after his meals is the lip nectar (adharāmṛta) of Yashodā or Svāminījī; the spout of the water pot (jhārī) is Yashodā's nipple and the red cloth that covers it her sārī; his perfume is the sweet aroma of Svāminījī's body; his Winter blanket is her embrace; his 'pyjamas' (sūthan) are her long-sleeved blouse (colī); his shawl (uparṇā) is her sārī; his crown (mukuṭ) is the full moon and his flared skirt (kāchanī) the moonbeams, which puts the devotee in mind of that climactic episode of līlā when Krishna joins with the gopīs in an amorous round-dance beneath the Autumnal moon.[34]

Those who take part in sevā also become sanctified as they identify themselves with the participants in the divine drama and experience for themselves the emotions that will ultimately enable them to taste the pure rasa of Krishna's līlā. In a sense sevā can be regarded as a kind of role-playing. But it should also be said that for many devotees, like the priest and kīrtanyā featured in this chapter, the līlā is real and to be really experienced. They appear to demonstrate that participation in sevā is not simply a matter of following prescribed rules and stage directions, but one of experiencing emotions that arise spontaneously and that affect their whole outlook on life. For devotees like them, there perhaps comes a point when the drama is not recreated but lived, when emotions are not imitated but arise from deep within, when the identities they assume become real.

Notes to Chapter VI

1. The 'accounts' of these poets can be found in CVV (pp.400-571). They have also been translated into English by Barz (1976, pp.105-256).

2. The 'accounts' of the poet-disciples of Viṭṭhalnāthjī can be found in DBVV (pp. 1-30).

3. Collections of padas are kept in most temples specially for the use of kīrtanyās. The volumes are arranged thematically according to daily, seasonal and festival rituals performed in the nijmandir. For example, there are padas for waking Ṭhākurjī (Jagāyave ke Pada), for breakfast (Kaleū ke Pada), for bathing (Snān ke Pada), for adorning (Shṛṅgār ke Pada), for offering pān (Bīrī ke Pada), for Winter and Summertime (Shītkāl and Uṣṇakāl ke Pada), and for every annual holiday. There are several useful studies of the Aṣṭachāp and their poetry in Hindī (see especially Mītal, 1950; Sharma, 1964); but there are few renderings of the padas in English, an important exception being an unpublished collection entitled 'The Poems of Sūrdās' translated by S.M. Pandey and N.H. Zide.

4. The mṛdaṅga is a cylindrical drum with a skin at both ends. Stringed instruments sometimes played in rāga-sevā include the vīṇā (bīna) and and sāraṅgī.

5. I collected much material on this aspect of sevā which I intend to analyse more fully at a later date. Pocock, who was himself impressed by the adornment of the deity in Puṣṭimārgi temples, mentioned his intention to provide a fuller account elsewhere, though as far as I know he has not yet done so (1973:116).

6. The eighth and last darshan of the day, Shayan, is closed to the laity for two months during the Winter from Mārgashīrṣa shukla 7 (November/December) to Māgh shukla 4 (January/February), being the day preceding the Spring holiday of Basaṅt Pañcamī. It is also closed for a further six months during the Summer and Rains from Caitra shukla 9 (March/April), the festival of Rām Navamī, until Āshvin shukla 9 (September/October), the day preceding Dashaharā. During larger festivals the daily routine is often altered: two darshans are occasionally held simultaneously and there are special darshans at Janmaṣṭamī, Annakūṭ, Basaṅt Pañcamī and Akṣay Tṛtīyā. All of the above-mentioned festivals are described later in the Chapter.

7. Sectarian texts called Sevā-Praṇālī, the 'Method of Sevā', give precise details of bhog-sevā and shṛṅgār-sevā as performed in Puṣṭimārgi homes and temples. There are different Sevā-Praṇālī for the different Houses of the Sampradāya. Those in my possession include Ṣaṣthanidhisvarūp Shrī Bālkṛṣnajīke Sūratke Gharkī Sevāpraṇālikā (Surat, 1965), and Shrī Vallabhasampradāya Puṣṭimārgīya Sāto Gharan Kī Sevavidhi (Bombay, 1936). There are many modern sectarian publications which give details of svarūp-sevā (see, for example, Vairāgī, 1977, pp. 36-65 and 91-94). Of the early texts in Braj Bhāṣā see Viṭṭhalnāthjī's instructions to his disciple Rājā Āshakaran on the method of svarūp-sevā in DBVV (p.149f.), the Bhāva-Bhāvanā of Shri Dvārikeshjī Mahārāja (b.1694) of the Fifth House (pp. 7-20 and 81f.), and a poem on the eight darshans attributed to Shrī Harirāyjī which can be found in Taṇdan (1961, pp.121-125).

8. The word maṅgalā in this context denotes an auspicious ritual performed at the commencement of an undertaking that bodes well for its successful completion.

9. It is said that babies wake early on cold Winter mornings at which time they cry to be fed, whereas the cool breezes of Summer mornings are conducive to deep slumbers. The approximate times of darshans during the Summer months between Akṣay Tṛtīyā (April/May) and Rath Yātrā (June/July) are as follows: Maṅgalā (6.30 a.m.), Shṛṅgār (7.30 a.m.), Gvāl (8.30 a.m.), Rājbhog (9.45-10.15 a.m.), Utthāpan (4.30-5 p.m.), Bhog (5.45 p.m.) and Sandhya-Ārati (6.15-6.30 p.m.). Special darshans are occasionally timed according to the gharī, a unit of time being roughly equivalent to 24 minutes. I witnessed an interesting method of time measurement in Temple E at Janmāṣṭamī. A Gujar Gaur paṇḍit had been called to count the gharīs with his 'water-clock', which consisted of a small copper pot pierced with a tiny hole in its base floating in a large copper bowl filled with water. It took one gharī for the pot to sink. Each time he promptly emptied and re-floated it marking the passing of each gharī with a vermilion stroke on the wall beside him. The darshan of Krishna's birth opened about midnight, or after 'precisely' 13 gharīs had elapsed since sunset.

10. During Maṅgalā, Shaṅkhanād is only sounded in havelīs where there are nidhi-svarūpas.

11. Kanhaiyā, 'beautiful boy', is a popular name for the young Krishna.

12. The offerings are now consecrated and ready for distribution as prasād. The containers left overnight in the nijmandir include a drinking water pot (jhārī) having a long spout and covered with a piece of red cotton cloth, a small metal box (baṅtā) containing sweetmeats, and one or two cone-shaped betel-leaf packets (bīrās) of pān. These three items are commonly depicted in sectarian paintings of the enthroned deity: the baṅtā and bīrā on Ṭhākurjī's right and the jhārī on his left.

13. Saubhāgya-sūṅṭha is a spicy and very costly sweetmeat that is regarded as having potent medicinal properties by virtue of its propensity to create heat in the body thereby combating Winter coughs and colds. Ideally, it contains fourteen 'heating' ingredients including most of the following: saffron (keshar), musk (kastūrī), ambergris, cardamom (ilāycī), almonds (badām), pistachios (pistā), cinnamon (dalcīnī), ginger (soṅṭha), peppers (pipale), black peppers (kālī mirca), nutmeg (jāyphal), mace (jāvittrī), milk, ghee and sugar. One should be careful not to take too much saubhāgya-sūṅṭha lest it over-excite the passions. Women especially are advised to take it only occasionally and in small amounts.

14. Shṛṅgār, meaning 'adornment', also denotes the rasa of love which is the principal sentiment of bhakti. The beautiful adornment of the image is both an expression of the devotee's love for Ṭhākurjī and also a spectacle that is capable of arousing feelings of love in the hearts of those who attend Shṛṅgār darshan.

15. The deity is given a ritual bath (snān) every day after Maṅgalā darshan, but never before 'because if Ṭhākurjī is bathed soon after waking he may catch a cold'. In fact, the daily bath involves no more than wiping the face and limbs of the image with a moistened cloth and sprinkling the feet with a few drops of water. More elaborate bathing rituals are performed on special occasions (see below, footnote 23).

16. Shṛṅgār bhog is simply a light snack (kalevā) consisting of milk, dried fruits, and perhaps soft pūrīs impregnated with much ghee. After the offering, the priest washes Ṭhākurjī's mouth with water (a rite known as ācman), offers pān, and refills the jhārī before opening Shṛṅgār darshan.

17. During Shṛṅgār darshan the deity is presented with a flute (veṇu) and allowed to observe himself in a mirror (ārasī, darpaṇ) held up by the priest.

18. These foods belong to the ansakharī category meaning that they are more resistant to pollution than sakharī foods like rice, curry, pulses and wheatcakes. Hence they are more suitable for taking outside the home on picnics, long journeys and excursions into the jungle.

19. In Mukhiyājī's havelī this darshan is known as Gopīvallabha Bhog and not as Gvāl. It was explained to me that in temples where there are nidhi-svarūpas, Svāminījī and the gopīs are thought to prepare bhog in their own homes before delivering it by hand to their beloved Krishna. In the DBVV (pp.143-144) Viṭṭhalnāthjī tells Rājā Āshakaran that the right to perform sevā of Gopīvallabha Bhog is reserved exclusively for members of the Vallabha dynasty and that this sevā should therefore never be performed in Vaiṣṇava homes.

20. Caupada is a board game played with dice. For an alaukika interpretation of this game see Barz (1976, pp.118-120) and the relevant Sūrdās poem in CVV (pp.412-414).

21. Ārati is performed in a wide variety of Hindu ritual contexts. In the havelīs there are normally four āratis a day: at Maṅgalā, Rājbhog, Sandhya and Shayan. The rite consists of the waving of one or more burning cotton wicks (battī) dipped in a pot (dīvarā) of ghee circularly before the object of worship. The performance varies from a few brief motions with the right hand to a long and drawn-out flourish. For example, some priests describe seven circles with the flame: once around the deity's face, thrice around the middle (nābhī, lit. 'navel'), and thrice around the entire svarūp.

Informants (Puṣṭimārgi and non-Puṣṭimārgi) gave varying interpretations of the meaning of ārati: some said that it was a symbol of revelation serving to illuminate the nijmandir, thus helping devotees to observe and concentrate their attentions completely on the divine image; some considered ārati as a means by which devotees expressed their love for god; others said that their love was reciprocated at the completion of the rite when they received the warmth of the flame (lau) in their open palms and transferred it to their faces. The lau of ārati was described variously as a manifestation of the love, favour or even subtle powers of Bhagavān.

Yet it is interesting that many Puṣṭimārgis insisted emphatically that they did not (should not) take the lau of ārati. Indeed in most havelīs, after the completion of the rite, the burning wick is taken

away and never passed among the congregation as in other temples. The reason for this, I was told, is that ārati is a means of removing the effects of the evil eye (nazar utarnā). It is a widespread belief in India that beautiful babies are particularly susceptible to the harmful effects of the eye of envy. Hence it is common practice for a mother to ensure the good health of her baby by doing utarnā: she clutches some salt or bran in her right hand, waves it circularly before her child, and then throws it away. In the same way, Mother Yashodā (Mukhiyājī) does ārati of her beautiful child who is the focus of so much attention. Ārati is therefore a means of expressing Yashodā's (the sevak's) love and concern for the well-being of Krishna. It is also a means of removing any bad feelings that might have been directed towards Krishna, particularly when he was in the jungle tending the herd. In the previous chapter I suggested that the svarūp is a depository of the pure emotions of its worshippers. Ārati is one of many ways by which devotees establish their pure feelings in the svarūp. But ārati is also a means of removing impure feelings which must not be re-experienced by devotees. It is perhaps for this reason that devotees do not take the lau of ārati, why the remnants of ārati are thrown away, the silver dīvarā re-purified, and the clay dīvarā destroyed.

There are different kinds of festival ārati. For example, at Janmāṣṭamī, Rath Yātrā, Annakūṭ and Rakhī there is cūn kī ārati, also known as motī kī ārati, when the pot containing the wick is specially made from the dough of fine rice flour mixed with milk and turmeric.

22. Many Puṣṭimārgis observe fasts on the birthdays of four of the principal avatāras of Vishnu, including Nṛsiṅha, Vāman, Rām and Krishna, and also twice a month at Ekādashī, the eleventh day of Shuklapakṣa and the eleventh day of Kṛṣṇapakṣa.

23. The ritual bath and anointment known as abhyaṅg is performed on most special occasions and is much more thorough than the daily bath (see above, footnote 15). The following account of this rite was given by a distinguished bhītariyā serving in the temple of Shrī Nāthjī at Nāthdwāra:

> Shrī Nāthjī Bābā is not given a full bath every day. We just sprinkle some water over his feet. But for abhyaṅg he is given a full bath...after Maṅgalā darshan when the curtain has been drawn.... There are two stools.... The one stool came with Shrī Nāthjī from Braj, the other is new. Both stools are high. This is because the svarūp of Shrī Nāthjī is tall so Mukhiyājī needs a high stool so that he can reach up to pour water over Shrī

Nāthjī's head. We stand on the new stool and we do abhyaṅg.

> First of all some aromatic oil - we call it phulel - is applied. Then aṁvale is prepared (from a certain kind of fruit ?) and used to wipe the dust from His body. After this...the bath ...only eight pots (loṭās) of water. Then sandalwood (candan) is brought in on a tray...about 5 kilos...and smeared all over His body. When I see Shrī Nāthjī completely daubed in sandalwood, all saffron-coloured, I feel that Lord Nṛsiṁha (the Man-Lion avatāra of Vishnu) is actually standing before me. This is my personal experience. The sandalwood is then wiped from Shrī Nāthjī's body with a cloth and more water is poured over Him. We apply perfumes and dress Him.

On festivals celebrating the birthdays of Krishna (Janmāṣṭamī), the Man-Lion Nṛsiṁha (Nṛsiṁha Jayantī), the Dwarf Vāman (Vāman Dvādashī), and the Prince of Ayodhya Rām (Rām Navamī), either a small svarūp or else a fossilised ammonite stone known as Shrī Shālagrāmjī is bathed in the five sacred substances (pañcāmṛta-snān, - described later in this chapter). A grand and regal ceremony of anointment known as abhiṣekha is held once a year at Snān Yātrā (also described later in this chapter).

24. The vāgā is a long flared robe which is generally worn during the cooler half of the year between Navrātri (September/October) and Rām Navamī (March/April), or else at big festivals such as Shrī Mahāprabhujī kā Utsav (the birthday of Vallabhācārya). However, during the temperate months of Āshvin (September/October) and Caitra (March/April) it is normally left to the priest to decide whether or not it is chilly enough for Ṭhākurjī to wear a vāgā first thing in the morning and last thing at night. Incidentally, at Maṅgalā, before Ṭhākurjī is dressed for the day, he wears a loose-fitting garment (ārabanda, ārabaṅdha) and shawl (uparnā) in Summer, and a long tunic (aṅgarkhā) in Winter.

25. As a rule, the more important the occasion, the more elaborate the shṛṅgār. This is especially true of the deity's head-dress. The kulaha is a cap worn aslant on the right side of the head. The coronet (candrikā), which sometimes displays an attractive fan of from three to five peacock plumes, is normally pinned to the kulaha by means of an ornament (sirpeñca). Ornaments worn on the left side of the head include kalagī and karanphūl. Other forms of head-dress worn instead of the kulaha include various caps (topī, ṭipārā), head garlands and turbans (pāg, pheṅṭā, seharā). The most elaborate form of head-dress is the crown (mukuṭ), usually adorned with peacock plumes and worn on full-moon days (pūrṇimā) such as Vyās Pūrṇimā (June/July) and Mahārās (September/October). At such times the mukuṭ is aesthetically complemented by the flared skirt (kāchanī) having three broad horizontal bands of three different colours. Puṣṭimārgis generally consider

mukuṭ-kāchanī to be the most elaborate form of shṛṅgār.

26. A pichvāī is a cotton screen which hangs behind the deity. Each temple has many pichvāīs, both plain and patterned to suit the different festivals and seasons. Some pichvāīs are hand-painted with attractive and brightly coloured scenes of the Krishna līlās.

27. On big festivals Ṭhākurjī is adorned with a variety of ornaments and jewels, among them toe and nose rings (mudrikā) and several kinds of bracelet (karā, bhūjbaṅda) worn on the upper arm, below the elbow and round the wrists. There are several varieties of flower garlands (vanmālā, lit. 'forest garland') including one made up of eight-petalled flowers (aṣṭakalīhār). There are also many kinds of necklace including a navgṛha comprising nine stones which represent the nine planets recognised by astrologers and worn when the stars are not favouring Ṭhākurjī.

28. The Puṣṭimārgi flag is a triangular pennant bearing the design of a red tilak surrounded by green rays on a saffron coloured background.

29. Khaskhas is a kind of grass which when dampened gives off a distinctive and pleasant aroma.

30. The pichaurā is a length of particularly fine cotton cloth that is tied around the waist. It is worn by Ṭhākurjī on most days during the Summer and Rainy Season.

31. Puṣṭimārgis often point out that their deities are only smeared with sandalwood paste during the Summer and never in the Winter since the cooling properties of sandalwood would cause them considerable discomfort. They add that such care is seldom shown in non-sectarian temples where priests blindly follow ritual procedure by using sandalwood throughout the year without a thought for the comfort of the deity.

32. The colour green is often associated with the sentiments of alaukika joy (ānanda).

33. Paṅjīrī, a sweetmeat with a distinctive flavouring of coriander, is very popular at Janmāṣṭamī when it is distributed in large quantities.

34. The Rahasya Bhāvanā - Nikuṅj Bhāvanā by Shrī Gokulesh Prabhu is a fascinating exposition of the bhāvanās established in the articles of sevā written in Braj Bhāṣā (see bibliography).

CHAPTER VII

THE FOOD OFFERING

> NAT'HDWARA - October 15 (1819)... I was also honoured with a tray of the sacred food, which consisted of all the dried fruits, spices, and aromatics of the East. (James Tod, Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han).

I now focus on the form of devotional worship known as bhog-sevā in which the deity is served with a wide variety of sumptuous foods. Bhog-sevā is treated as a key concept affording an insight not only into sectarian culinary techniques, but also, through its propensity to express and to articulate ideas, into the nature of the relationship between Krishna and the devotee.

The nature of the man-divine relationship and the significance of the food offering in Hinduism have been inadequately understood by anthropologists. Harper has argued that relations among the gods and between gods and men are an extension of hierarchical relations among castes based on the idiom of the pure and the impure (1964). In a study of Hindu worship in central India, Babb gives substantial support to Harper's theory when he suggests that the food offering is an indispensible act of worship (pūjā) which serves to express the superiority of gods over men. By taking prasād, men consume the leftovers of the gods thereby demonstrating their inferior status vis-à-vis the gods in hierarchical terms (Babb, 1970, and 1975, pp. 53-67).

This approach has not gone unquestioned. In a recent article on worship in a major Hindu temple in Madurai, south India, Fuller has denied the theory that the passing of food between men and gods replicates inter-caste food exchange and has suggested that purity and pollution are not merely a matter of high and low social status but have wider ethical and

spiritual connotations: purity defines an idiom by which men show respect to the gods (Fuller, 1979). In a study of the significance of the offering in Assamese Vaishnavism, Hayley has also criticised Babb for his analysis of the offering in terms of a hierarchical model. With reference to her own material she explains that it is through the offering that the devotee enters into a commensal relationship with God. The offering is to be regarded as the embodiment of an emotional attitude, devotion, which is offered to Krishna and retrieved with the result that the devotee re-experiences the self transformed through the act of giving to Krishna. In this sense the material offering serves as the vehicle by which the devotee expresses and experiences an inner divinity (Hayley, 1980).

The ethnography presented here does not easily lend itself to an interpretation in terms of the principles stressed by Harper and Babb. Like Hayley I acknowledge the significance of the offering as the embodiment of an emotional attitude, while along with Fuller I am aware that there are extra spiritual and moral dimensions to the pure-impure idiom which have been generally ignored by anthropologists. In this chapter both themes are combined and explored further. As we shall see, the way to an understanding of the nature and significance of the offering in the Vallabha Sect is to recognise its conceptual status as a thing of 'pure-emotion' (shuddha-bhāva) on a 'sacred' (alaukika), as opposed to a 'profane' (laukika), level. But first we should familiarise ourselves with culinary practices and principles pertaining to the preparation of food offerings in the havelīs.

The appropriation of food offerings in the havelīs follows a sequence of conceptually distinct and irreversible stages. The unprocessed food ingredients procured for the purpose of preparing an offering for the deity are known as sāmagrī. The term is also applied to food while it is undergoing preparation in the temple kitchens. When fully prepared it is

called siddha-sāmagrī. By virtue of the fact that the siddha-sāmagrī is intended as an offering to the deity it is known as bhog. Finally, after bhog has been accepted by the deity, that is, when the worshipper considers that the deity has enjoyed a portion of the offering, the left-overs become consecrated as prasād. Here prasād denotes the food remains of the deity and not food ingested by the deity. Consistent with the spirit of absolute dedication professed by the devotee at initiation, all food intended for consumption should first be offered to Lord Krishna; hence all food consumed by the devotee should be consecrated food. In Puṣṭimārgi homes a niche, or even a separate room, is specially set aside for the worship of an image or hand-painted picture of the infant Krishna which is offered a portion of food before every meal.

The Food Ingredients: sāmagrī

Some foods are prohibited (niṣedha) as offerings; others are used sparingly or restricted to particular seasons. Those prohibited include all non-vegetarian foods (meat, fish, eggs, and their derivatives),[1] along with alcohol, garlic, onions, radishes, carrots, cabbages, water melons and red lentils. The reasons given by devotees for the avoidance of these eatables vary.[2] One generally applicable rationale relates to a dual classification by which foods are distinguished according to their relative thermal attributes: some foods are regarded as being 'hot' in nature, others are 'cool'. There is said to be a close correspondence between diet and an individual's physical-cum-mental disposition.[3] Hot foods create heat in the body disposing to anger, pride, physical strength, disease, and extremes of passion; cold foods dispose to mental sobriety, restraint, pacifism, gentleness and sound physical health, qualities which are essential prerequisites for the performance of sevā. A Vaiṣṇava should be cool-blooded and so is required to abstain from heating foods such as meat, alcohol, onions, garlic and radish. The virtues of cool-bloodedness are also extolled as virtues appropriate to the Brahman and

Mahājan (Bania) castes, social categories which form the bulk of the membership of the Vallabha sect in Ujjain and western India. Mahājans are said to be pacifistic, while they themselves lay great stress on the merits and advantages of keeping a cool temper in business practice. On the contrary, Rājputs, being partial to hot foods, are said to be bad tempered and easily spurred to physical violence, attributes traditionally associated with their duties as rulers and fighters. I met but one Rājput initiate of the sect in Ujjain.

This dual classification of foods is corroborated by a more refined triple classification of all matter, organic and inorganic, into the qualities (guṇa) of sāttva (pertaining to purity, spirituality and luminosity), rājas (pertaining to passion, anger, pride), and tāmas (pertaining to darkness, lethargy, delusion).[4] Krishna relishes those foods which are cooling in nature (sāttvik), especially milk preparations, rice, fruits, green vegetables, and pulses; but he abhors those foods which are excessively hot or stinking in nature (rājasik/tāmasik), such as garlic, onions, radish and sweets fried in vegetable oil.[5] The effect of food on temperament was clearly explained to me by a disenchanted young Brahman devotee:

> In my view many Puṣṭimārgis now eat rājasik-bhojan. Sāttvik-bhojan has a very beneficial influence on the body and leads to longevity. No disease will trouble the body. Thoughts will remain pure. But eating rājasik-bhojan causes diseases of the throat and digestive system; it also leads to feelings of pride. By eating tāmasik-bhojan many kinds of disease arise, thoughts and feelings become impure and tāmasik attitudes predominate.

Another class of prohibited foods which is linked to the hot/cold dichotomy, albeit indirectly, includes tomatoes, carrots, lentils, and water melons. These foods are avoided in sevā 'because they are red', with the further qualification - 'like blood'.[6] A more immediate link is suggested by non-vegetarian connotations. It was pointed out to me on several occasions that the manner in which a water melon is carved with a knife to reveal the red pithy interior is strongly suggestive of animal slaughter or sacrifice. For the same reason, devotees engaged in the

cutting of vegetables prior to cooking avoid using the verb katnā 'to cut', owing to its associations with the carving of meat; instead they prefer to use the verb saṅvārnā which is free from such repulsive associations.

The substitution of a less emotive verb for the cutting of vegetables may be related to ritual contexts outside the sect where there is a tendency to substitute vegetables for animals as sacrifices to malevolent deities so that a blood sacrifice can be performed without the shedding of blood. A variation occurs when a live goat or cock is offered as a sacrifice to the goddess but not killed. The following account given by a Puṣṭimārgi Brahman clearly illustrates this point:

> Devotees of the Devi eat non-vegetarian foods. In their books it is written that they must sacrifice animals. It is necessary for them to do so. We do not wish to sacrifice animals so we are doing it in a different way. Suppose we are performing a sacrifice or doing pūjā of a Devi. In place of an animal we bring a pumpkin. There are two kinds of pumpkin: one is yellow and another white. We Brahmans take a white pumpkin to the Devi. There are many Devis - Durgājī, Harsiddhi Mātā, Kālika Devi. A person who favours a particular Devi will perform worship of her for nine days and nights during Navrātri by reciting mantras and reading Durgā books. On the last day at the completion of pūjā there is a need to sacrifice a goat or a cock. Ṭhākurs, Rājputs and Kṣatriyas do this nowadays in Ujjain; but never for Harsiddhi Mātā. There has not been a sacrifice in Harsiddhi Temple for a thousand years. Instead, a pumpkin is sacrificed. Or goats are led into the temple and they are offered to the Devi alive. No animal is killed at Harsiddhi, instead we say 'amāraya' (not to be killed) and no-one will kill it.[7]

An ambivalence is central to the act of blood sacrifice, 'It must be done but in a different way', or, as the same person later put it, 'It is not written that a Puṣṭimārgi should perform sacrifice, even of a pumpkin, but in following his family tradition he must do so.' This also reminds us of an ambivalence in the early texts. Dumont refers to a passage in the Chandogya Upaniṣad which assimilates the notion of reluctance to kill with sacrifice: 'The wise man does no harm to any creature, except in the case of sacred rites' (see Dumont, 1980:148). Kane identifies this attitude in the Vedas:

> In spite of the prevalence of animal sacrifices, there are already in the times of the Rg. traces of the conception that a devout offering of praise or a fuelstick or of cooked food was as good as a more solemn sacrifice (Rg. VIII. 19. 5, VIII. 24. 20) and that oblations of food made to the accompaniment of heartfelt hymns become like bulls, oxen and cows in sacrifice.(Kane, 1941, Volume II, part 2, p.775)

Brahmans in Ujjain have their own myths which appear to mediate between the contradictions underlying animal sacrifice. One story is particularly eloquent in this respect:

> A forefather of one of my distant relatives was a devotee of the Devi. Every year during Navrātri he performed devi-pūjā for nine days and nights only stopping for his essential duties. On the ninth day he used to offer mutton and wine to the Devi. One year the Mahārāja, Daulat Rao Sindhya (1794 -1827 AD), was staying in Kāliyādah Palace when someone reported to him that a Brahman was offering meat and wine to the Devi. So at midnight the king came into the town and knocked on the Brahman's door. When the door opened the king informed a member of the family that he wished to take darshan of the Devi immediately. Hearing footsteps approaching, the Brahman covered the mutton and wine with a cloth. The king searched the room very carefully. Finally he pulled away the cloth to reveal some milk boiling in a pot and a bunch of roses. The king was astonished and prostrated himself before the Devi. Then he touched the Brahman's feet and begged forgiveness. He ordered that the Brahman be given land which is still owned by his descendants.

The transformation of the sacrificial offerings, meat and wine, into roses and milk is particularly effective in mediating two conflicting elements in sacrifice. On the one hand, since the Devi craves for meat and wine, it is essential that her devotees satisfy her demands in order to placate her anger and to acquire siddhi, the power gained through the proper accomplishment of worship. On the other hand, Brahmans should be strictly vegetarian and also should practise ahiṅsā, or non-injury to living creatures. The myth effectively demonstrates how the blood sacrifice can be performed successfully by not being performed, how the Brahman can continue to follow his traditional Vedic duties without flouting the rules of ahiṅsā and vegetarianism. The two contradictory elements of the ritual are validated at one and the same time.

Moreover, the myth links up other symbolic forms which inform Hindu ritual in a variety of contexts. I refer in particular to thermal and

colour symbols. Meat which is red in colour (and 'hot') is transubstantiated into a bunch of roses (the word for a rose in Hindī, gulāb, is also used as an adjective to describe red things). Roses are red, like meat, but they are not meat.[8] Wine, which is hot and red, becomes milk, which is cool and white. Wine is often associated with the colour red: local liquor is sold as gulāb pānī or 'rose-water'. The fact that the milk is boiling merely implies that it is hot, but in a very different sense, for no matter how hot, it is always cooling in its effect on mental disposition. The conversion of wine into milk has a parallel in the digestive process whereby the proportion of red blood which is formed from cooling foods is further converted into white semen in the head. Milk is thought to be particularly effective in increasing the semen store.

A wider appreciation of colour symbolism can be gained through the identification of a colour triad which underlies a variety of ritual contexts. Those substances designated sāttvik or 'cool' are frequently represented by the colour white: sāttva pertains to luminosity and is associated with light-coloured foodstuffs and the semen of spirituality. Krishna prefers light-coloured, cooling foods (shītal bhog), which are thought to be particularly effective in keeping him cool during the intense heat of the Summer. For the same reason he is dressed in white clothes and adorned with white jasmine flowers and pearls. Alternatively, rājasik or 'hot' foods are associated with the colour red, and hence with unrestrained passion. The Hindī verb lāl honā, literally 'to be red', is appropriately rendered by the English phrase 'to see red'. Angry deities are hot deities; they are red in colour, and they prefer blood and red flowers as offerings. Tāmas substances and attitudes are associated with darkness, smoke, spiritual ignorance, death, the smoke rising from the funeral pyre and the ashes left after cremation. Another familiar term for wine which is a tāmasik and decaying substances is kālāpānī, or 'black water'.

Red and black are frequently found in the same ritual contexts, especially in the worship of wrathful gods and goddesses. On the outskirts of Ujjain on the site of the ancient city there stands a temple dedicated to the fierce guardian of Shiva known as Kāl-Bhairava.[9] On one of my occasional visits to this temple I had the opportunity to witness an offering of liquor (gulāb) to the deity. The priest, who was dressed completely in black, poured half the contents of a bottle into a shallow dish and put the dish to the deity's lips. The liquor passed into its mouth and disappeared. The remaining drops were then mixed with the rest of the liquor in the half-full bottle and each worshipper was given a few drops as prasād. Kāl-Bhairava's insatiable desire for blood was temporarily appeased, and so also was that of the priest after guzzling down the not insubstantial remains.

Admittedly the articulation of colour and thermal symbols in ritual contexts deserves more systematic study.[10] My main interest here concerns prescribed and proscribed kinds of food in Puṣṭimārgi worship. I would suggest that the various classificatory labels attached to particular groups of foods do not operate with reference to separate taxonomic systems, rather they represent dominant labels derived from the same symbolic cluster. Viewed in this way a specific foodstuff, say meat, is to be avoided for a number of stated reasons: either it is 'hot', or 'impure', or 'red', or 'hiṅsā', or 'non-vegetarian'. Similarly, a water-melon, because of its blood-red entrails, approximates to 'hiṅsā', 'blood', 'corpse', 'heat', and so on. I am not saying here that a Puṣṭimārgi would regard a water melon with the same feelings of revulsion that he regards dead animal flesh. One devotee who told me that he was violently sick after passing a butcher's shop was quite prepared to enjoy a slice of juicy red melon. It is not that meat and melon have similar innate attributes: meat is impure corpse whereas melon is neither corpse nor need it be impure. Rather, the resemblance which links melon and all 'red foods', and meat,

garlic, wine, and so on, is to some extent extrinsic to the foods themselves and intrinsic to the person who regards them. The question is what mental attitude is 'redness' capable of generating in the mind of the sevak? By cutting open a water melon and extracting the red pithy interior it is possible that he may liken his actions to those of the blood sacrificer. Such thoughts are in themselves polluting and repulsive to Krishna who would subsequently refuse to accept the offering. Kane, who mentions several categories of foods which are prohibited in the Dharmashāstras,[11] also includes a class of foods designated bhāvaduṣṭa which would substantiate the Puṣṭimārgi's attitude:

> An example of bhāvaduṣṭa given by Aparārka is sugarcane juice which a man may feel to be forbidden to him because he believes it to be wine. According to Gaut.17. 12 bhāvaduṣṭa means food offered with disrespect or which the the eater comes to hate or becomes disgusted with. (1941, Vol. II, part II, pp.771-2)

Alternatively, those Puṣṭimārgis who follow family tradition by worshipping the goddess (and many do so) are able to perform sacrifice according to a correct procedure, and with the appropriate devotional attitude required of them by the goddess, as if they were performing a blood sacrifice. But who knows what the sacrificer is really thinking when he thrusts the sacrificial knife into the plump juicy pumpkin?

Two important points concerning the relationship between food and mental attitudes have emerged from the above discussion. In the first place, different kinds of food are thought to have different properties capable of affecting the mental-cum-physical disposition of the eater in different ways such that a man is what he eats. In the second place, emotional attitudes can be established in foods (and thereby transmitted to others) such that in one ritual context a disemboweled pumpkin is as good as mutton whereas in another a sliced water melon is as repulsive as mutton. Whereas the former is acceptable to the Goddess, the latter is unacceptable to Krishna. We shall see later that this second point is crucial to an understanding of the offering in which it is the thought

that really counts and by which one gives and retrieves a part of oneself.

The Preparation of Sāmagrī

The appropriation of foodstuffs for bhog-sevā begins with the procurement of ingredients in their natural, unprocessed state (kaccī sāmagrī).[12] All ingredients should ideally be purchased from the market without having been subjected to preliminary treatment (slicing, peeling, husking, and grinding).[13] Sevaks who purchase temple provisions in the market place should refrain from smelling or tasting them. Vegetables and fruits already cut into portions should be avoided. The cooking process begins with the manual techniques of cutting, peeling and washing. It is preferable that these tasks be performed by initiates within the temple precincts since they are instrumental in rendering the foods permeable to impurity. Whole raw foodstuffs are fully insulated against external sources of pollution (supplies are purchased from market stalls run by Muslims as well as high-caste Hindus). Nowadays it is impossible to obtain all provisions in an unadulterated condition. Many priests consider it a sign of the times that they are forced to acknowledge the impracticalities of some preparatory cooking techniques and reluctantly accept items which have already been subjected to preliminary refinement. I was told that a few decades ago unrefined Banārasī sugar was always used in the preparation of sweets but nowadays it is unavailable so ordinary refined sugar has to be used.[14] Pulses were once processed entirely by devotees. According to one priest:

> Previously pulses were grown in the fields of Ṭhākurjī near Ujjain and flour was made from the seeds. During the Rainy Season the seeds were spread out in the open and left to soak. Then they were partially dried and ground in the temple. But now pulses are purchased as flour. Much manpower is needed for this work which is not available today.

At the stage prior to the application of heat water has a crucial dual role: as a purificatory agent and as an agent which permeates food exposing it to external impurity. Fresh whole vegetables and fruits are

always ritually purified by sprinkling them with well water. Conversely, as soon as water comes into contact with grains (by washing and soaking) they become kaccā in the more specialised sense of the term (see footnote 12) and hence open to impurity.

It is likely that the prohibition of tap water (nal kā pānī, lit., 'pipe water') in temples of the sect and the preference for well or river water[15] also derives from the conceptual distinction between the natural and the treated. Pipe water flows through metal or clay pipes which have absorbed pollution: well and river water flow through natural channels.[16] Strict devotees will only drink or bathe in well or river water. Hence water which is an agent of purification can also become a medium of pollution depending on its prior appropriation.

Raw whole sāmagrī is brought to the temple and stored in the bhaṇḍār. Dry (sūkhā) ingredients may be kept for long periods (grains, rice, dried fruits, and spices). Vegetables, fruits and other perishable items are purchased regularly. Every morning small groups of sevaks can be seen sitting in the temple courtyards performing the preliminary tasks of food preparation under the supervision of the storekeeper.

After this stage of preparation, the foodstuffs are passed on to priests in the inner rooms of the temple for further preparation in the temple kitchens. No food will be seen again by sevaks until it is distributed as prasād either later in the day or on following days.[17] Henceforth all preparations are carried out by following strict procedural rules designed to protect the food and cooks from contagion. Priests must first assume a state of enhanced ritual purity. As the cooking proceeds, the food offerings become increasingly susceptible to pollution.

The Preparation of Sāmagrī in the Temple Kitchens

There are three major categories of cooked food having three separate kitchens specially reserved for their preparation.[18] This physical division of cooking areas ensures that preparations having a higher resistance to

impurity are not reduced by contact with preparations having a lower resistance to impurity. They are as follows:

	Kitchen (rasoīghar)	Prepared Food (rasoī)
1.	Dūdhghar	dūdhghar rasoī
2.	Ansakharī Ghar	ansakharī rasoī
3.	Sakharī Ghar	sakharī rasoī

1. Dūdhghar, literally 'Milk Kitchen', is reserved for foods prepared from milk, including curd, butter, and many kinds of milk sweets. All grain ingredients are excluded. Fruits (phalahār), which are the same as milk in their capacity to resist pollution, may also be prepared here if the temple does not maintain a separate 'Fruit Kitchen' (Phalaghar). Dūdhghar rasoī is considered to be highly resistant to impurity.

2. Ansakharī Ghar, also known as Bālabhog is reserved for preparations derived from grains or vegetables which are cooked by frying in clarified butter. They include fried wheatcakes (pūrī) and various sweet preparations collectively known as mithāī. Ansakharī rasoī is less resistant to impurity than dūdhghar rasoī but more resistant than sakharī rasoī.

3. Sakharī Ghar, like Ansakharī Ghar, also includes preparations derived from grains and vegetables. But cooking techniques and cooking mediums are different: preparations are fried in vegetable oil instead of clarified butter, or boiled in water (pulses, rice, curry), or dry-roasted on a griddle (wheatcakes). Sakharī rasoī is easily polluted and hence every effort must be made to maintain its purity.

Ritual manoeuvres involving entry into kitchens and movement between kitchens are subject to restrictions which, if ignored, may lead to the defilement of food offerings undergoing preparation. Movement is therefore regulated by the recognition of successive boundaries (meda) which may only be crossed if the devotee has the necessary ritual qualifications and after he or she has entered aparas. There is a gradation of boundaries each enclosing a zone of greater purity. The first boundary separates the

inner (bhītarī) rooms of the temple from the outer (bāharī) rooms. All kitchens are situated in the inner rooms and may be entered only after bathing. The second boundary separates Dūdhghar from Ansakharī and Sakharī Ghar. All devotees, regardless of caste, as long as they are initiates of the sect, may, on receiving the permission of a guru, enter Dūdhghar in order to prepare milk sweets. But they must first assume an 'inferior' condition of ritual purity known as sevakī aparas. They are not qualified to enter any other kitchens. Brahman priests, who assume a 'superior' condition known as khāsā aparas, may enter all kitchens. The third boundary is only applicable to the priests (bhītariyās) and separates all three kitchens. In moving from kitchens of lesser resistance to impurity to ones of higher resistance to impurity (Sakharī to Ansakharī to Dūdhghar), priests must wash their hands and feet before crossing each threshold. On returning, no such precautions are necessary. A priest carefully explained the procedure:

> If I touch ansakharī sāmagrī with sakharī hands then it becomes sakharī: if I touch dūdhghar sāmagrī with ansakharī hands then it becomes ansakharī. So I must always wash my hands.[19]

Moreover, if a priest in khāsā aparas enters Dūdhghar and touches (is touched by) a devotee in sevakī aparas, he must bathe again before returning to the other kitchen. Summarily, we can say that food preparations having greater susceptibility to impurity require more stringent protection from external agents of pollution than preparations of lesser susceptibility to impurity, while at the same time, the latter require protection from contact with the former.

The same rules apply to the cooking area (caukā) and to implements utilised in the kitchens. For example, if sakharī food is prepared on a stove in the ansakharī kitchen, then the stove and the kitchen become sakharī and all food subsequently prepared there will be sakharī until the stove and kitchen have been ritually purified by washing, scrubbing and the application of fresh cow dung. Alternatively, all food cooked

on a stove in the sakharī kitchen will always remain sakharī irrespective of ingredients, cooking media and cooking methods used.

Cooking vessels may also function as agents of contamination, for, like food, they are ascribed differential degrees of resistance to impurity. Pots and pans must be ritually purified by scouring and rinsing in well-water before being taken from Sakharī Ghar to Ansakharī Ghar. Certain vessels which are considered to be particularly robust may be taken into the temple outhouses and later returned, providing that they are first repurified by scouring, rinsing and heating in a fire. Vessels made of gold, silver, copper and brass are normally included within this 'superior' category. Conversely, vessels made of clay, iron, compound metals (bell-metal), and brass (in some temples), are unsuitable for sevā once they have been removed from the inner rooms and no amount of swilling, heating or scouring will repurify them. Stainless steel vessels are becoming increasingly popular, but their status remains ambiguous: most priests insist that they can be repurified by heating in the fire while there are some who deny the efficacy of this treatment. Aluminium vessels are considered to be highly permeable to pollution and are not normally utilised in sevā.

The terms sakharī and ansakharī approximate to kaccā and pakkā in the sense that the latter terms are popularly used in northern India to denote categories of cooked food. The Puṣṭimārgi method and classification of food preparation is treated here as a variation of kaccā/pakkā cooking. Pakkā food, like ansakharī, is less prone to pollution than kaccā and hence less restricted in its circulation. Generally, it can be carried outside the home, exchanged among different castes (providing differences in status are not too extreme), and is customarily the food of feasts, picnics and long journeys. Kaccā food, like sakharī, has a limited sphere of circulation and is normally prepared and consumed in the home by members of the same family or caste. The same characteristics of

inclusiveness and exclusiveness apply to sakharī and ansakharī foods.[20]

I shall now focus on the cooking process itself. The underlying rationale is somewhat complicated so the following basic principles should be kept firmly in mind:

1. Substances bearing a higher concentration of pollution have a tendency to contaminate substances bearing a lower concentration of pollution. Two or more substances in direct contact automatically assume the status of the substance having the highest intensity of pollution. Therefore the pure is constantly prone to the advance of the impure.

2. This one-way flow of pollution is aided or arrested by the degree of permeability to pollution of a specific substance and/or the presence or absence of intermediate barriers or boundaries between the pure and the impure. Hence foods which are prone to contamination can be protected by the interposition of boundaries between themselves and substances of higher pollution intensity. But whereas some substances can be repurified (the priest who loses aparas, the copper vessel, the kitchen stove), others remain permanently defiled (the clay pot, food). Cooked food, once contaminated, stays contaminated.

3. In their natural state edibles are impervious to the advance of the impure. But the preparation of food opens it in varying degrees to impurity. Hence precautions must be taken to protect food from impurity during and after its preparation.

The fact that the cooking of food opens it in varying degrees to pollution will help us to appreciate the culinary logic. Cantlie, having identified this principle in an analysis of the cooking process as conceptualised by Assamese Hindus, further establishes a relation between degrees of susceptibility to defilement and degrees of decomposition.[21] Different cooking methods open food to varying degrees of decomposition. It is interesting in this respect that sakharī prasād, being highly prone

to contagion, is said to go rotten very quickly and so is always consumed on the same day as cooking, whereas ansakharī prasād is said to remain fresh for a whole month after cooking owing to the preservative qualities of the ghee in which it is cooked. The identification of this principle will help us to grasp more fully the physical operations which are believed to occur during the cooking process.

Moreover, three variables operate in determining the sakharī/ ansakharī status of prepared foods. They are as follows:

1. Basic constituents. Both sakharī and ansakharī preparations have grains and/or vegetables as basic ingredients. Grains are referred to as anna, 'life food', and include rice, pulses, wheat, and barley. The presence of grains serves to differentiate sakharī and ansakharī preparations from dūdhghar preparations since they are always excluded from the latter. Otherwise these basic constituents can be described as 'passive' because they have no influence in determining the status, either sakharī or ansakharī, of the finished preparation.

2. Cooking agents. These include water, vegetable oil, ghee, hydrogenated ghee, milk, coconut milk, salt and fire. They can be described as 'active' constituents because they have the capacity to act upon the basic ingredients in a way that determines the status of the final preparation and that assists in their decomposition. Some agents appear to be more potent in their effects than others: water, vegetable oil and salt are the strongest decomposition-cum-defilement agents.

3. Cooking sequence. The degree of potency of the various cooking agents is modified by the stage in the cooking sequence when they are introduced to the basic ingredients. As a general rule, agents are more effective in determining the final status of a preparation when added during the early stages of cooking and may be ineffective if added at a later stage.[22]

The degree of potency attributed to various cooking agents may vary

between families, castes and areas of India. This often appears to be a matter of status. Puṣṭimārgis in Ujjain are known for, and pride themselves on, their stringency in culinary matters. They point out that some food preparations classed as sakharī in their temples would normally be given the 'superior' pakkā label elsewhere. For example, if salt is added to anna during the early stages and the mixture is then fried in ghee as for ansakharī cooking, it will nevertheless remain sakharī owing to the early addition of salt, a powerful decomposition agent. Similarly, foods fried in vegetable oil instead of ghee remain sakharī because of the potency of oil as a decomposition agent. In many non-sectarian contexts, however, salt and vegetable oil are not normally regarded as having such potent effects. The same procedures would normally result in pakkā preparations. But devotees consider salt and oil to be just as effective as water in the decomposition of food such that both agents are excluded from ansakharī cooking. This is partly a matter of sectarian prestige, of 'superior' culinary habits. It is also a matter of the customary fastidiousness of the merchant castes who make up a large proportion of the sect's total membership.

Furthermore, it is common practice for Hindus to modify their culinary styles according to the importance of the occasion. Pure unadulterated ghee (shuddha ghī) is preferred to hydrogenated ghee (ashuddha ghī), which is in turn preferred to vegetable oil. As one non-initiate explained:

> The status of pakkā food rises on special festivals. Haluā, for example, is normally prepared in the home in hydrogenated ghee, but for special functions, like Satya Nārāyaṇ Kathā, or when it is offered to god, pure ghee is used. On Navrātri most preparations are in pure ghee. It depends on the circumstances.

The circumstances in the havelīs are such that Krishna always deserves the best of everything.

A sample of some common recipes prepared in the havelīs will help us to evaluate the relative strengths of various cooking agents in reducing the status and effecting the decomposition of food. The first two recipes

belong to different status categories despite the fact that they share the same basic ingredient - wheatflour.

ROṬĪ (sakharī):

Sequence	Directions
I	Take flour (amount as required).
II	Add water and knead. Mould dough into a ball and flatten between the palms. Using a rolling pin (belan) roll out on a pastry board (caklā) until flat and round.
III	Place on a hot griddle (tavā) on stove and roast, turning once.
IV	Remove roṭī from griddle and hold over naked flame for a few seconds until it puffs out (phulānā).

PŪRĪ (ansakharī):

I	Take flour.
II	Add water and knead etc. (as for roṭī).
III	Place in a shallow frying pan (karhāī) containing hot ghee and fry.
IV	When cooked remove from frying pan.

The above directions have been given in as elementary a form as possible so that the effects of variations in cooking style can be easily assessed. The manipulation of flour differs markedly in the preparation of roṭī and pūrī at stage III of the cooking process when dough is either roasted on a griddle or fried in a pan of ghee. Many priests also insist that in the preparation of roṭī the kneading stage (II) is crucial in determining the status of the ingredients because flour is rendered sakharī as soon as water is added to it. For this reason many say that they first rub some ghee into dry flour before adding water when preparing pūrī, thereby preserving the ansakharī status of the ingredients. In practice this culinary technique depends upon the stringency of the cook. The common practice of smearing ghee on roṭī at stage IV has no influence on promoting its status, rather it is a matter of etiquette and generosity to offer roṭī smeared with ghee to god and to guests, for it is considered tastier, and, owing to the high price of ghee, a sign of lavish hospitality. Krishna prefers to have ghee on his roṭīs. Pūrīs are nearly always fried

in ghee in the Vallabha temples and seldom in vegetable oil since the latter is conducive to sakharī. There is one exception, however, when sakharī pūrīs (pūrīs fried in oil) are offered to the deity on some occasions during the Winter months. A priest explained:

> Knead flour with water and mould into a ball. Add some ghee - this will make it tasty for Ṭhākurjī - and roll it out flat. Add some mustard oil and knead. Then roll it out flat again and add black pepper and asafoetida. Then fry in a pan of hot mustard oil. Asafoetida, mustard oil and black pepers are hot in nature and good for Ṭhākurjī's health in the cold season.

Salt is normally added to roṭī during the kneading stage but never to pūrī. The addition of salt to flour is said to make it irreversibly sakharī such that pūrī prepared in this manner would become sakharī. As I mentioned above, salt, like water, is a powerful agent contributing to the decomposition of anna thereby exposing it to defilement. But if salt is added to pūrī at the end of the cooking sequence (stage IV) its effect is of no consequence.

Milk, like ghee, is a particularly robust cooking agent such that when added to anna it has the capacity to neutralise the effects of salt, water and vegetable oil if these latter agents are added at a later stage. Because milk is a liquid and not viscous like ghee, it can be substituted for water during the kneading stage. This allows the preparation of ansakharī roṭī since water is an unnecessary ingredient. Roṭīs made with milk are appropriate for long journeys and picnics because they are highly resistant to impurity. They are prepared in some temples as a tasty treat for Ṭhākurjī.

The potency attributed to salt as a cooking agent is clearly illustrated by the preparation of sev (seo). Sev is a common savoury snack food in central India served in most wayside eating places or 'hotels' as they are called. Its basic constituent is gram flour. The flour is kneaded with water, black pepper, salt and various seasonings and then forced through a sieve into a pan of hot vegetable oil. But in the Vallabha temples sev

is prepared in a different way: it is referred to as fīkā, 'tasteless', having the connotation 'without salt', because salt is not added during the kneading stage. The same ingredients, excluding salt, are kneaded and then fried in ghee (not vegetable oil); the result is therefore an ansakharī preparation. Salt is added at the final stage of cooking 'from above' (ūpar se) without corrupting its 'superior' status.

Some preparations bear the same name, have the same ingredients, and yet are of different status. All depends upon the order in which the active cooking agents come into contact with the passive basic constituents. Khīr (rice pudding) may be prepared in both Sakharī Ghar and Ansakharī Ghar and happens to be one of Krishna's favourites.

KHĪR

	Sakharī	Ansakharī
I	Rice grains (husked)	
II	Rice grains are washed in water to remove foreign particles	Foreign particles are either picked out by hand, or, ghee and rice grains are rubbed between the palms of the hand so that they are removed (by sticking to the ghee)
III	Grains are dropped in a pot of hot milk and simmered until the rice is cooked. Sugar is added along with appropriate seasonings and dried fruits.	

Stage II is crucial. If rice grains come into contact with water at this point the rice pudding will be sakharī. If no water is used for washing the grains, the rice pudding will be ansakharī.

The above recipes would appear to substantiate the three variables operating in the cooking process outlined earlier. Summing up, we can say that the addition of the cooking agents salt and/or water and/or vegetable oil to the basic constituents (anna) at stages I and II and during stage III (the application of heat) is conducive to sakharī preparations such that the subsequent addition of ghee and/or milk is of no consequence.

Alternatively, the addition of the cooking agents ghee and/or milk (and occasionally coconut milk) both before and during the application of heat, and before the addition of salt or water is conducive to ansakharī preparations. After stage III, food is considered cooked such that the addition of cooking agents becomes a matter of taste or prodigality, and not a matter of purity and impurity.

Those food offerings prepared in Dūdhghar are least open to pollution and precautions governing their preparation are relaxed accordingly. Devotees distinguish dūdhghar sāmagrī from sakharī and ansakharī sāmagrī in terms of the absence of grains (anna) in the former. The dūdhgar category corresponds to the category of foodstuffs normally allowed during Hindu fasts (vrata). These foods are classed as phalahār.[23] Because dūdhghar prasād is particularly pure in status, its range of exchange is considerably wider than both sakharī and ansakharī prasād. A Brahman priest and even a Mahārāja may accept milk sweets from the hands of devotees. Moreover, all initiates are allowed to enter Dūdhghar in order to prepare dūdhghar bhog for the temple deity. For these reasons initiates have devised many elaborate recipes which fall within the dūdhghar category. Some Gujarātī merchants excel in this art and occasionally offer complete meals to their gurus made up entirely of ingredients acceptable in dūdhghar and hence also acceptable to the gurus.[24] One popular sweetmeat that is prepared on such occasions is jalebī. Normally jalebī has flour (maidā) as a basic constituent and is prepared by frying in ghee and dipping in a sugar solution. It is normally ansakharī. If prepared in dūdhghar, however, either mavā (milk solidified by continuous boiling and the addition of sugar), curd, potato or root of arum (aravī), may be substituted for flour (maidā). Unlike maidā, these four substances are all acceptable in dūdhghar cooking. Some jalebīs are prepared from arum root with either curd, potato or mavā added for flavour. Arum root is boiled, dried and ground into a fine powder and mixed with mavā and some arrowroot to give

it a smooth consistency like maidā. It is then fried in hot ghee and afterwards dipped in a sugar solution. In this way the basic grain constituents (anna) which determine sakharī or ansakharī cooking are avoided with the result that the jalebīs are highly resistant to impurity.

When the bhog is ready, a small portion of each food item is placed before the deity and the rest is left in Bhog Mandir (see Chapter V, p.160). After some time the bhog offered to the deity becomes prasād so that it can be retrieved and placed with the rest of the bhog in Bhog Mandir, thus converting the latter into prasād. Priestly informants stressed that dūdhghar, ansakharī and sakharī bhog are offered in separate containers and later distributed separately as prasād, otherwise all prasād would be reduced to sakharī status. Nevertheless, even if defiled, the spiritual status of prasād remains inviolable. It is this attribute that I now intend to explore.

From Bhog to Prasād

Having described at some length the classification and preparation of sāmagrī, I now move on in this and the following section to an analysis of the process involving the conversion of bhog, the food offering, into prasād, the food remains. In particular I examine what the offering 'says' about the relationship between Krishna and his worshippers. But first I shall have to clear the ground of some actual and potential misconceptions.

The dominant theme spanning the previous section concerns the protection of the sevak, the sāmagrī and the temple kitchens from the constant threat of intrustion by the impure. Failure to observe certain precautions is liable to render the food offerings impure and hence unfit for the deity. The more intimate the deity's services and the greater the susceptibility of the food preparations, the stricter are the precautions taken to exclude agents of pollution. The condition of ritual purity (khāsā aparas) assumed by the priests helps to ensure that the purity of the offerings and of the

temple kitchens is maintained. Puṣṭimārgi priests have a reputation for meticulousness in this respect.

Yet despite such scrupulous observances, I would argue that an exclusive emphasis on the pure-impure idiom as it relates to social hierarchy or to physical (organic) aspects of the world would lead to a serious misrepresentation of the significance of the offering in the eyes of devotees. The presentation of food to Krishna and the retrieval of his leftovers is an act of caring loving devotion expressing an intimacy which should ideally transcend all ceremony. The priest who shows a punctilious regard for rules while preparing the deity's meals is behaving in an exemplary manner; but he should not allow his concern to become a preoccupation which might hinder the spontaneous outflowing of love for Krishna. As the Supreme Lord, Krishna deserves due respect, but this should not prevent the sevak from expressing feelings of all-consuming love and affection for Krishna as his child or paramour.

I argue this point in reaction to an analysis of the food offering in the context of Hindu worship made by Lawrence Babb (1970 and 1975) who has suggested that the pure-impure idiom as it relates to hierarchical differences between castes also provides the basis for an interpretation of the significance of the food offerings. Babb sets out to expose the common structural core unifying diverse styles in Chhattisgarhi ritual by reducing them to two primary elements: 1) the food offering as a central and indispensible act of worship in which the god is honoured, and 2) purity of context. The paradigm which renders the transaction of foods between worshipper and deity meaningful replicates a wider social context where asymmetrical patterns of food exchange are demonstrative and expressive of caste hierarchy. The exchange of certain categories of food confers a superior status on the giver vis-à-vis the receiver, particularly in the case of those foods which are highly susceptible to impurity such as boiled rice. The food category expressing the greatest

hierarchical distance between giver and receiver is leftover food (jūṭhā) which is contaminated by the saliva of the leaver. Hence the acceptance of prasād (the leftovers of the deity), like the acceptance of jūṭhā, is to be regarded as a demonstration of the worshipper's inferior ritual status vis-à-vis the deity, while at the same time it is a means of honouring the deity (1970:296).

Babb further develops his model on the basis of Mauss's reduction of gift-giving to a triple obligation, to give, to receive, and to repay, and, with the food offering in mind, refers to Mauss's maxim 'The gift not yet repaid debases the man (here god) who accepted it' (Mauss, 1969: 63; Babb's parentheses). If the gods are to be honoured, then their supremacy must be affirmed. This presents the worshipper with a dilemma which is overcome by the acceptance of the deity's leftovers:

> Ritual should honor the god yet at the same time it should pay the god (for past or future favors).... But taking food from the hand of another is demeaning .... Thus if the ritual is to have the net effect of affirming rather than negating the superior status of god, reciprocity in some form must be incorporated with the ritual sequence. Hence the necessity of prasad, the counter-prestation. (1970:296)

Although Babb is dealing specifically with Chhattisgarhi ritual, he suggests that the two primary elements identified by him, along with his interpretation of their significance, might prove acceptable to all Hindu ritual. His ultimate goal is comprehension 'of the most elementary levels of structure in Hindu religious action' (ibid., p.303).

But the hierarchical distance and formality of the devotee-divine relationship that emerges from Babb's account stands in sharp contrast to the warmth and intimacy of the relationship as conceptualised in Puṣṭimārga in particular and Bhaktimārga in general. The notion of unequal status between the sevak and Krishna does find expression in the sect as I have already indicated (see Chapter IV, pp.140-142). It is termed dāsya-bhāva: the sevak regards himself as a humble servant (dāsa) of Krishna. But this

emotional attitude is regarded as a form of devotion appropriate in the early stages of sevā, or else it is a means of preventing pride. King Āshakaran, the celebrated disciple of Viṭṭhalnāthjī, regarded himself as a lowly servant of Lord Krishna; the juxtaposition of high worldly status and lowly spiritual status draws an obvious moral of humility. Several of his kīrtans end with a request to Krishna to leave some remains (jūṭhan) for his servant (dāsa).[25] However, as I also explained in Chapter IV, dāsya-bhāva is considered much too inhibitory a devotional attitude for most devotees; rather awe for divine majesty (mahātmya) is to be superseded by emotions of love (sneha, prem). Awe for Krishna should not prevent the spontaneous expression of love on the part of his devotees.[26] It is in order to conceal his sovereignty that Krishna appears as a child. We have seen that the dominant sentiment of devotion in the sect is vātsalya-bhāva in which the sevak regards himself as a parent of the infant Krishna, as Yashodā. Many of the food offerings are prepared as if for a young child and hence are commonly referred to as bālabhog or 'baby food'. Like all babies Krishna is particularly fond of milk, curd, butter, sweets and rice pudding, whereas hot spicy foods are avoided lest they burn his mouth. Savoury pūrīs are prepared with much ghee so that they are soft and easy to chew. Betel nut is ground finer than usual for the same reason. We have also seen how the chief priest of the temple is said to be the essential form (svarūp) of Mother Yashodā and assumes the role during sevā by playing with toys before the deity, lightly scolding him for his childish pranks, and removing the effects of the evil eye after he returns from herding the cows. Kīrtans sung before the deity complement this devotional mood. In addition devotees worship with mādhura-bhāva by emulating the gopīs. As a playmate of Krishna the devotee becomes equal to Krishna in age and status: as a lover both devotee and Krishna are intimately bound in an embrace which obscures inequalities.[27]

Another reason why Babb's theory is inappropriate for the present study is that the presentation of food to a deity as 'payment' for past

or future favours is contrary to the altruistic spirit of sevā. Moreover, pūjā is considered by devotees of Puṣṭimārga to be a phenomenon of Maryādāmārga or 'the path of strict conformity to Vedic rules and rituals' in which the devotee allegedly regards his worship as a means of obtaining merit, rather than as an end in itself. This path is considered inferior to the Path of Grace because sevaks realise that Krishna bestows his grace according to his own independent will (icchā), and not in response to the endeavours of would-be devotees. In sevā no distinction is made between the performance of sevā and the rewards of sevā: sevā is both the means (sādhana) and the fruit (phala) of devotion. By performing sevā the sevak experiences the indescribable bliss of pleasing Krishna. The fact that Krishna is thought to recognise the sevak's devotional efforts by accepting the offering is in itself an act of divine favour. Theoretically, food prepared for one's own pleasure is unacceptable to Krishna, while to eat unoffered food is to partake of sin (pāp): the eater digests his own selfish intentions. The word bhog for food offering also means 'the experience of enjoyment' and is commonly equated with the word ānanda meaning 'bliss'. Informants' interpretations of the enjoyment aspect of the offering reflect the notion of sevā as both a means and a reward of devotion: bhog connotes the enjoyment experienced by the devotee in the knowledge that Krishna will enjoy his offering. Prasād, meaning 'grace, favour', is also equated with ānanda since it is impregnated with divine bliss as a consequence of Krishna's enjoyment of the offering. The essence of prasād is ānanda which is subsequently digested and inwardly experienced by the devotee. Informants further pointed out that the word prasād shares the same sentiments as the word prasannatā meaning 'pleasure', happiness'; the latter is used regularly in sectarian literature to describe the delight experienced by Krishna and the guru on receiving the devotion of their true devotees, or, alternatively, the pleasure experienced by devotees on receiving the grace of Krishna and the guru.[28]

I shall return to an explanation of the details of this spiritual chemistry at the end of the chapter. What I would like to stress here is that the identification of the altruistic sevā sequence adds an extra dimension to our appreciation of the significance of the offering in Puṣṭimārgi ritual which is far more relevant than the hierarchical model proposed by Babb.

Consecration is a rite de passage in which the prepared food offering, bhog, occupies a temporary and marginal position. As such, bhog is taboo; it is surrounded by restrictions which serve to protect it from 'outside contact' for two related reasons. In the first place, prepared food is open to pollution such that it must be insulated against impure agents in order to preserve its purity. Should a devotee who is not in aparas touch, see, or even smell the offering during preparation, or while it is being presented to the deity, then it would be considered 'touched' and unacceptable to Krishna.[29] In the second place, however, the offering occupies a marginal state because it is 'intended' for Krishna but has not yet been accepted. Should a devotee touch, see, or smell the offering-to-be, then he would effectively enjoy it before Krishna. This would be a contravention of the altruistic intentions of sevā, of the precept that everything should be offered to Krishna before enjoying it oneself. It is not considered necessary for Krishna to actually taste the offering in order to enjoy it, rather it is said that bhog is converted into prasād if Krishna enjoys it by feasting his eyes on it, or smells it, or if he is delighted by the knowledge that his devotees have lovingly prepared it specially for him. In the same way, offerings-to-be are particularly threatened by hungry persons since they are more likely to feast upon the sight or the aroma of the food thereby desiring or enjoying it before Krishna.[30] With regard to our earlier comments concerning food as a vehicle for the transmission of emotions, the sequential logic is clear. Bhog is an embodiment of the feelings of selfless love for Krishna experienced by the devotee. Prasād

is an acknowledgement of the devotee's devotion and an embodiment of Krishna's joy on receiving bhog. For the devotee to enjoy bhog before it has been offered to Krishna destroys the sequence; he consumes his own selfish desires.

Incidentally, it is interesting that word-contact is also considered to be a form of sense-contact. Devotees possess an elaborate vocabulary which allows them to refer to specific food offerings without mentioning them directly by name. Foodstuffs are sometimes referred to metonymically; that is, characteristic attributes such as shape, colour, or cooking vessels and implements associated with their preparation are substituted for the common names. Oblique metonymous reference to items of bhog is usually made by priests within earshot of devotees or by devotees who find it necessary to discuss the offerings. Both ritual behaviour, specifically the avoidance of sense-contact, and ritual vocabulary, the avoidance of vocal reference, are conceptually the same. Verbal-contact, like sense-contact, can render the offerings 'touched'.[31] But perhaps even more important is the fact that it would enable the speaker to enjoy the offerings prematurely because he would savour the names which belong to them. Again this would destroy the sevā sequence. Some examples of words for bhog used in the havelīs are as follows:

1. Dūdh (milk) is called safedī (the white substance).
2. Dāl (boiled pulse) is called pīlī (the yellow substance).
3. Jalebī (a kind of fried sweetmeat having a characteristic coiled shape) is called āṅṭekī (the 'coiled' or 'knotted' thing).
4. Roṭī (wheatcake) is called tavakī or belankī (after the griddle or rolling pin used in its preparation).
5. Rabaḍī (milk thickened by continuous boiling with sugar and other flavourings) is called camacā (after the 'spoon' with which it is served).
6. Haluā (a sweetmeat) is called kaṭorī (after the small dish in which it is served).

7. Cāval (cooked rice) is called sakharī (being the dominant preparation within the sakharī category of cooked foods).

The altruistic and intimate spirit of the man-divine relationship in bhakti is replicated by the relationship between a wife and husband. In Ujjain, as elsewhere in India, a wife is expected to take her meals only after her husband has eaten (Carstairs, 1957: 80; Harper, 1964; Khare, 1976: 83). If the husband is late coming home, his wife will not partake of the meal. In explaining this behaviour, Harper (1964) focuses on that aspect of the relationship in which the wife consumes the leftovers of her husband's meals. He interprets this as a form of 'respect pollution'; the wife voluntarily demonstrates her inferior status vis-à-vis her husband by consuming his 'polluted' remains. But an interpretation made in terms of the pure/impure idiom is unsatisfactory for several reasons.

In Chapter IV I discussed the significance of the concept pati-sevā which refers to the selfless devotion of a wife for her husband. One form of pati-sevā is pati-vrata whereby a wife fasts for her husband's well-being. Pati-sevā is essentially altruistic: it is done solely for the husband and not for self-gain. The wife derives pleasure in the knowledge that she is pleasing her husband. Viewed in this light, the wifely practice of eating after the husband has eaten is a demonstration of pure unselfish devotion. The wife cooks not for herself but solely for her husband's pleasure. If she did happen to eat before her husband, then she would be guilty of cooking food with the intention of satisfying her own appetite. The principle underlying this sequence is very different from that of 'respect pollution'. The order of eating is more an expression of selfless devotion than of status inferiority.

Moreover, 'leftovers' in the context of the sevā sequence do not necessarily imply food contaminated by the husband. It also includes all food remaining in the ritually pure cooking area. These leftovers are untouched and 'uncontaminated' by the husband since the wife serves her

husband by passing food to him from the pure cooking area without touching him or his plate. Consequently, the food 'remains' which are later eaten by the wife are not necessarily regarded as 'remains' in the sense that they have been polluted by the husband's touch (jūṭhā), but they are 'remains' in the sense that they represent food cooked for the husband's pleasure but not taken by him. Insofar as the whole meal is cooked solely for the husband's pleasure the remains are a token of his replenishment; they are not necessarily jūṭhā.

A Brahman admitted to me that he and his wife occasionally ate from the same plate, though always in private, adding that it was one way of showing their love for one another. He also insisted that the practice was widespread. In such circumstances both husband and wife eat the leftovers of one another. They do not stop to consider whether or not such food is jūṭhā. Rather the act of eating from the same plate is an expression of mutual love and affection; private love transcends all public rules.[32]

Devotees often describe the relationship between the devotee and Krishna by using the model of the ideal wife. One interpretation of the bhāva of the vermilion tilak is that it is like the bindī, the dot worn by all women on the brow, which is a sign of the happily married woman (saubhāginī).[33] There is a common saying among Vaiṣṇavas normally spoken with a sense of fulfilment after taking darshan of Ṭhākurjī, khās khasam kī naukarī bajalī, meaning 'I have now completed service of my husband'.

Perhaps it is the case that if we hope to identify links between social relationships among people and spiritual relationships between people and gods then we should set aside the hierarchical model and focus on those relationships which express more idealistic, altruistic or egalitarian principles, such as wife-husband, lovers, mother-child and friends, relationships which are based more on personal sentiment than on social obligation.

Bhakti and the Modification of the Pure/Impure Idiom

Purity is not conceived as a positive attribute but as an absence of impurity; purification is not an infusion of purity but a removal of pollution. The conversion of bhog into prasād does not render the latter any purer in the normal sense since prasād remains open to contagion in the same way as does the bhog from which it is derived. Hence, there is sakharī, ansakharī and dūdhghar prasād. But no matter how polluted prasād becomes it still remains prasād, a token of grace, even though devotees may refuse to accept it on the grounds of its impurity. Prasād has positive qualities deriving from its sacredness rather than from its purity.[34] In the same way, bhog is not only regarded as a pure substance, but also as an embodiment of the 'pure' devotional emotions of those devotees involved in its appropriation.

The terms 'pure' and 'impure' (pure = shuddha, pavitra; impure = ashuddha, apavitra) as they relate to actions (i.e. observing rules and procedures for protection against impurity or for the removal of impurity) are used in a wider sense to evaluate mental attitudes of moral and spiritual import. Devotees of the Vallabha sect are urged to endeavour by all means to keep their conduct (ācār) and thoughts (vicār) pure (shuddha). Mental purity, expressed in pure thoughts, and physical purity, expressed in pure actions, are regarded as complementary merits. Both conditions are required for the sincere performance of devotional service. On the one hand, informants insist that purity of the body is conducive to purity of mind: 'thoughts become pure by following strict rules of conduct'. On the other hand, they are equally if not even more insistent on the opposite effect: 'if a man is not pure in thought then his body will not be pure', and hence, 'a man is not worthy to do sevā if his mind is not pure'. The condition of ritual purity known as aparas relates to the subtle as well as to the gross body. The sevak's thoughts and emotions should be completely engrossed in the service of Krishna. If his thoughts dwell on mundane matters his condition of spiritual as well as physical purity is destroyed

and any food which he is preparing is rendered useless as bhog. 'Impure' thoughts (such as anger, pride and envy) and impure sensual contact both have the capacity to destroy aparas. Thus in the absence of sincere mental orientation, sevā is useless, a mere pretence, and a blind conformity to ritual rules of purity.

The appropriate mental attitude, bhāva, is realised only by those souls nourished by the grace of Lord Krishna. By experiencing pure emotion (shuddha-bhāva), the soul is able to witness and to participate in līlā while still occupying a worldly body. The difference between pure bhāva and the absence of pure bhāva is encapsulated in the opposition between the alaukika and the laukika. The advance of the soul from a laukika to an alaukika existence is made possible by the establishment of the Path of Grace whereby souls are uplifted from a condition of defilement (duṣṭa) to a condition of purity (shuddhatā). Here laukika impurity and alaukika purity are to be understood in spiritual terms. As Barz explains:

> Vallabhācārya's teachings hold that the laukika and alaukika states are not physical states but are states of attitude. They do not result from bodily actions but from attitudinal orientation. (Barz, 1976: 14)

We are therefore presented with a parallel between the pure-impure idiom as it relates to the subtle and not the gross body, and the alaukika-laukika idiom as it relates to spiritual experience. The latter terms are conveniently rendered in English by the words sacred and profane. Hence in this context purity approximates to the sacred and impurity to the profane. We shall see that this spiritual interpretation of purity provides a rationale that supersedes the notion of physical or gross purity, especially when the rules of the latter threaten to impede the spontaneous expression of pure alaukika bhāva.

Returning to the food offering we can begin to understand more comprehensively the significance of this positive attitude towards it. Consider, for example, the following comments made by devotees:

> In sevā we must have prembhāva (love emotion). Without this sevā cannot be performed. Bhog is a thing of pure emotion (shuddha-bhāva). Bhagavān does not eat anything in a laukika form. In order to control the senses, Vallabhācārya Sampradāya teaches that the purest eatables should be prepared and offered to God and only then may we take them. In this way physical and mental impurities are removed. We must not take food without first offering it to God. Purity of mind is the objective of Vallabha Sampradāya.

Moreover, pure emotion, which is alaukika, is essential if Krishna is to accept the offering:

> If you prepare bhog with true bhāva then God will take it; but he will not take bhog if it is not offered with bhāva. If without real bhāva we offer Ṭhākurjī water, even in a silver cup, he will not take it.

Ultimately it is quite conceivable in terms of Puṣṭimārgi thought for Krishna to accept an offering which in ordinary (laukika) circumstances would be considered highly polluting and yet which in spiritual (alaukika) circumstances is regarded as an expression of the purest intentions of the sevak. Two examples from the Vārtās were brought to my attention by devotees.

The first story tells of a prostitute named Benidās who had such profound love for her Ṭhākurjī that she could not endure a moment's separation from him. She even performed sevā during the four days of her menstrual period, although such conduct was strictly proscribed. Some sevaks complained of her behaviour but Viṭṭhalnāthjī fully understood her needs and allowed her to continue to do sevā during her menses. But he warned other Vaiṣṇava women not to do likewise.[35]

The second story concerns two disciples of Viṭṭhalnāthjī, one of whom was very wealthy and the other very poor. Both accompanied their guru on a pilgrimage of Braj. One day they had set up their cooking areas and had begun to prepare bhog for their deities when a dog entered both kitchens. Such an incident is normally considered serious enough to defile a kitchen and all of the food undergoing preparation. For this reason Viṭṭhalnāthjī ordered the rich Vaiṣṇava to dispose of the polluted food and to prepare

fresh offerings. But he allowed the poor Vaiṣṇava to continue preparing his offering. The reason for this apparent contradiction is that the rich Vaiṣṇava had felt proud that he could offer Ṭhākurjī whatever the deity wanted and had the wherewithal to obtain fresh ingredients. The poor Vaiṣṇava had no spare supplies and was very worried. But he had prepared the bhog with such intense feelings of love and humility for his Ṭhākurjī that his offerings remained pure despite the fact that a dog had entered his cooking area.[36]

Both the prostitute and the poor Vaiṣṇava had pure devotional emotions which transcended all mundane concerns for purity. In the same way the sevak should never allow his mind to become preoccupied with thoughts of purity or impurity, otherwise Krishna may refuse the offerings. Another well-known Vārṭa tells of a sevak of Vallabhācārya who, after making an offering to Ṭhākurjī, was worried that the deity's clothing might come into contact with the plate and hence pollute the bhog. Because he entertained such mundane (laukika) thoughts, Ṭhākurjī kicked the plate to the floor and refused the offering.[37]

What I would suggest here is the need for a wider appreciation of the pure/impure idiom. It is analytically useful to identify two discrete and yet mutually influential evaluations of the nature of purity, that is, as an 'objective' and as a 'subjective' concept. These terms are here intended to approximate to a distinction stressed by devotees between worship performed in accordance with traditional social rules and regulations of the profane (laukika) world, and the inner emotional attitude of the worshipper and his perception of the sacred (alaukika) world. Conceived in objective terms, pollution is a property of the external physical world existing in unstable and varying degrees of intensity in animate and inanimate matter. Purity is negative pollution intensity. Pollution is dangerous because it is communicable: man is constantly open to contagion through organic exudations of the body, the death of relatives, the consumption

of tainted food or accidental contact with members of lower castes. All serve to corrupt a person temporarily, or, in some extreme cases, permanently. Permanent levels of impurity are attributed to castes and demonstrated in the structure of interaction between castes; the ritualised giving and receiving/refusing of food is one of the main forms through which hierarchy is manifested. Hence man must learn to live with the threat of pollution and to counter vigilantly the threat by following strict precautionary rules of conduct to protect himself and his physical environment from pollution or to remove pollution physically. In the Vallabha temples purity is stressed in approaching the deity. But purity in this objective sense is a property of the external world which must be kept apart from ritual procedures. It is purity and impurity conceived as an objective notion that appears to concern Babb in his interpretation of the significance of the offering in Chhattisgarhi ritual.

Conceived in subjective terms, purity is not a property of the physical (laukika) world, but an attitude. Krishna removes all the impurities in the souls of his devotees through an act of grace. Sevā is a combination of physical effort in which the body and actions must be pure, and an emotional attitude which is pure because of its spiritual sincerity. The latter condition is the most important, otherwise the actions of sevā amount to a mere pretence of devotion. The condition of aparas is conceived as a condition of objective and subjective purity, purity of the gross body and purity of the subtle body. The distinction identified here is not a peculiarity of Puṣṭimārga but is also applicable to bhakti in general. Holmström recognises a parallel distinction in his study of the development of values of autonomy in a village that has recently become part of the south Indian city of Bangalore. According to Holmström the development of the idea of purity represents a move from objective to subjective responsibility:

> Traditional bhakti questions the idea of this quasi-physical purity and the idea of mechanical pollution,

> replacing them with an ideal of inner purity and non-attachment, which is to be obtained not by outward precautions or ritual but by meditation and devotion, and which allows the liberated soul to reach salvation (however this is conceived of).... Modern bhakti stresses purity of intention, which it identifies with moral goodness and sometimes with positive action for the common good: this is the ideology of 'social service', often justified with a rather protestant and individualistic interpretation of the Gita. (Holmström, 1971: 38)

The same idea lies at the basis of the Puṣṭimārgi distinction between puṣṭi-bhakti and Maryādāmārga (or the path of strict conformity to social and Vedic rituals). Maryādāmārga is hedged about with rules and regulations pertaining to purity such that only members of the higher castes are ritually pure enough to perform Vedic rituals, thereby acquiring merit. They follow these rules as if they were automatons. Bhakti is spontaneous, disinterested and stresses inner intention rather than outward behaviour. It is through pure emotions (shuddha-bhāva) that the individual can transcend the hierarchy of the world and its restrictions and enter into communion with Krishna. It is also in this sense that we can ultimately appreciate the theoretical significance of the food offering.

In Chapter V, I explained the conceptual significance of the temple svarūp as a depository of the loving devotion of its worshippers. By performing sevā the devotee expresses his profound love for Krishna and establishes his emotions in the svarūp and thereafter re-experiences the same emotions which have been spiritually augmented by the bliss (ānanda) experienced by Krishna as a result of receiving the worship of his devotees. The food offering is a tangible demonstration of this emotional transaction. Costly bhog prepared with the utmost dedication, and given in generous amounts,[38] becomes the tangible medium by which the devotee's overflowing love is conveyed to the svarūp, thereby helping to make the latter puṣṭi or 'nourished'. Lord Krishna as the svarūp enjoys the offerings thus acknowledging the devotee's devotion. On taking prasād the devotee tastes the bliss (ānanda) of Krishna.[39] It is significant that the devotee plays an active part in the consecration whereas the deity's role is

essentially passive. It is the devotee who is directly instrumental in making the offering sacred, as one devotee explained to me (in English):

> There is bhāva, that is feeling, that we offer food to God and we make it sacred. What is important is the feeling that God accepts our offering. It is not necessary for Him to accept all of the items; the fact is that He graces and acknowledges our feelings.

At prasād feasts the sevak is often served with generous amounts such that he is bound at some stage to inform the server that he can take no more. But he never calls 'bas' (enough), as if completing an ordinary meal, instead he calls 'ānanda'.

Notes to Chapter VII

1. The English words 'vegetarian' and 'non-vegetarian' are normally used. Amiṣ-bhojan ('flesh-food') and niramiṣ-bhojan ('non-flesh-food') are also current.

2. Reasons for the avoidance of particular foods include: a) those foods which cause the breath to smell in a manner considered repulsive to devotees and also to Krishna, especially if the god smells the breath of those sevaks who perform his intimate services (garlic and onion); b) foods which have been introduced to India from abroad and which are therefore not sanctioned by the traditional texts (tomato, cabbage, cauliflower); c) foods grown using human excrement as fertilizer (cabbage); d) foods which are polluting on the grounds that to eat flesh is to eat corpse (meat, fish, eggs); e) foods (as above) which are associated with hiṅsā (the intention of causing harm or death to living creatures).

3. There is a well-known adage: jaisā khāo anna vaisā baje mana ('you are what you eat'). Food is ingested and 'cooked' internally before going to form the blood. Some blood is stored as semen in the head. Hot foods inflame the blood and the passions whereas cool foods cool the blood and the passions. Cool foods facilitate the retention of semen and hence lead to the acquisition of spiritual powers. Hot foods cause feelings of passion and lead to the loss of semen (see, in this respect, Cantlie, 1981, pp. 43-44).

4. Many devotees were quite familiar with these Sanskritic terms. 'Heating' foods are usually associated with both rājas and tāmas categories whereas 'cooling' foods are described as sāttvik. Hence the dual classification is retained. The three categories of food are clearly described in the Bhagavad Gītā (Chapter XVII, verses 8-10). The Gītā also applies these three qualities to the four varnas (Chapter XVIII, verses 41f.).

5. The use of vegetable oil, which is considered a tāmasik substance, is restricted in Puṣṭimārgi temples. The more expensive unadulterated ghee is preferred, being sāttvik in nature.

6. The ethnographic literature appears to make little mention of red foods. Khare (1976:159) suggests that malevolent deities are partial

to red things and 'like to receive red flowers and intoxicating and passionate foods'. Kane, in passing, summarises a Dharmashāstra text: 'All red exudations (resins) of trees or the juice that oozes out from trees when they are cut (with an axe etc.) should not be eaten, since their colour is due to the (sharing of) brāhmaṇa-murder'. (History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. II, part 2, 1941:758).

7. Compare the Vedic aghnyā (not to be killed) implying 'that which cannot be killed, reserved for sacrifice' (see Dumont, 1980:386).

8. Babb mentions that the appeasement of the blood-thirst of the Devi is effected in vegetarian homes by offering red flowers (1975:225).

9. Kāl-Bhairava (Black Bhairava) has a counterpart known as Gorā-Bhairava (White Bhairava). The temple at Ujjain is traditionally associated with the left-handed Tantrikas known as Kāpālikas who were notorious for their habit of drinking wine from human skulls.

10. The best study of colour symbolism in ritual contexts is Turner's 'Colour Classification in Ndembu Ritual' (1966, pp. 47-85). Turner suggests that the colour triad (red, white, black) is of universal significance, because these colours 'epitomize the main kinds of universal-human organic experience' (ibid., p. 80). He also suggests that the colour triad receives its most elaborate exegesis in the Chāṅdogya Upaniṣad and the commentary by Shankarācārya (ibid., pp. 75-76). See also Beck (1969) for a study of colour and heat in south Indian ritual contexts.

11. For example, Svabhāvaduṣṭa (forbidden on account of its very nature) - garlic, leek, onion, etc.; Kriyāduṣṭa (forbidden on account of certain actions done to it) - cooked food seen by an outcaste, dog, etc.; samsargaduṣṭa (spoiled by foul contact, etc.). (Kane, 1941, II, 2:774).

12. The terms kaccā and pakkā have several connotations: at one level they describe the natural states of food (unripe/ripe, uncooked/cooked) or objects (house built of clay/brick, bad firewood/good firewood). The more specialised usage relates to the sequence of food preparation and of mediums used in the cooking process. In the sense given above kaccī sāmagrī implies raw foodstuffs as opposed to prepared (cooked) foods.

13. Khare (1976: 44f.) and Cantlie (1981, pp. 42-43) suggest that it is necessary to expand the scope of 'cooking' in the Hindu context to include all methods of treatment which lead to the decomposition of

food making it suitable for digestion. Hence the cooking process begins with the manual techniques mentioned above.

14. Some devotees suggest that processed sugar is refined by using powdered animal bones. A temple priest explained that refined sugar could be purified by boiling it in water and scooping out any foreign bodies which float to the surface.

15. Four out of five Puṣṭimārgi temples in Ujjain have wells within their precincts while the fifth obtains water from the well of a neighbouring temple.

16. A familiar metaphor compares the impure human soul which is purified by merging into Krishna with the impure channels of ditch water which are purified by merging into the holy river Ganges.

17. Information concerning the preparation of sāmagrī in the inner-kitchens is derived from interviews and conversations with priests from temples in Ujjain, Nāthdwāra, Indore, Braj, Mandasaur, and some village temples near Ujjain.

18. The three categories of prepared food have already been outlined in Chapter III, p.119.

19. The verb used for the washing of hands in this context is khāsa karnā and not the more common dhonā. The former implies ritual purification.

20. On the pakkā/kaccā distinction see Marriot (1959, 1968), Mayer (1960), Khare (1976) and Dumont (1980). The words sakharī and ansakharī occur in the early Braj Bhāṣā texts (e.g. CVV, Vārtā 3, pp. 30-32), and, like many words that were current in the Braj region during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, have become part of the specialised ritual vocabulary of the sect. I am uncertain of their precise derivation. One possible explanation is that sakharī is derived from the adjective sakarā meaning 'narrow, confined', hence sakharī rasoī refers to prepared foods that are normally confined to the home, the family and the subcaste. The prefix 'an' implies the opposite, 'not'. Another possible explanation is that ansakharī is somehow related to nikharī, meaning food cooked in clarified butter.

21. See Cantlie (1981) for a particularly informative article on culinary practices and procedures among Assamese Hindus.

22. Khare has stressed the importance of the cooking sequence. Consider, for example, 'If the flour or rice is first treated with water and fire (and salt as held by some) any contact with ghee later will be

inconsequential and the preparation will remain kacha. In contrast, if the same food items are first brought into contact with ghee (or its accepted equivalent) and then water, salt and fire (these three being in any order), the consequence will be pakka food' (1976, pp. 62-63).

23. Phalahār literally means 'fruits' but the term is used in a general sense to refer to all fasting edibles. Milk, curd and fruits are acceptable in vrata and in dūdhghar as also are root foods (kaṅd, mūl) including potato, groundnut and aravī, and creepers (khīrā, laukī).

24. Each preparation is made to resemble in appearance those foods normally included in the daily meal.

25. See the Vārtā of Rājā Āshakaran in DBVV (pp.139-156).

26. Kinsley (1979: 109, footnote) gives an interesting account from the Bhakta-Māl concerning a devotee who worshipped Krishna as a child until one day he was possessed by the idea that the image was really the Supreme Lord. His feelings of parental affection were suddenly replaced by feelings of awe and servitude. But Krishna disappeared, reprimanding the devotee for his loss of parental affection: 'With the appearance of distance between the devotee and Kṛṣṇa came the disappearance of the god'.

27. Puṣṭimārga also differentiates between two kinds of bhakti which parallel the distinction between dāsya-bhāva and the more intimate approaches of a parent or lover. The first is devotion to the lotus-like feet (caraṇārvinda) of Krishna, an attitude which is bound by traditional scriptural rules. But the second shakes itself free of all rules and regulations, being the spontaneous outflowing of uninhibited love for the lotus-like face (mukhārvinda) of Lord Krishna. Take for example the gopīs, who, on hearing the enchanting sound of their paramour's flute, left their husbands and their domestic chores and rushed out from their homes, their garments slipping from their bodies as they hurried to meet their lover.

28. Informants were also of the opinion that prasād and prasannatā derive from the same verbal root. When defining the word prasād they frequently used the words prasannatā, kṛpā (kindness, favour) and ānanda (joy, bliss).

29. Harper (1964) has argued that the priest, the offerings and the deity's surroundings must be kept pure in order to prevent the deity from

sustaining impurity. But the deity in a Puṣṭimārgi temple cannot be polluted, nor, as I suspect, can non-sectarian deities (see, for instance, Fuller, 1979, p.469f.). Krishna is thought to reject polluted food. Although he cannot be polluted, it is only right that the enhanced purity of his surroundings and his meals should be preserved. He would refuse impure bhog not because it would pollute him, but because he would feel upset in the knowledge that his worshippers had shown such a lack of concern and respect for him while preparing the offerings. Moreover, the devotee knows that Krishna would prefer to go hungry rather than accept polluted food. Hence if the devotee offered polluted food he would be responsible for causing his Lord much distress (kaṣṭa). Consequently, he should ensure that the offering is pure as a matter of spiritual etiquette and respect. Compare Fuller's comments on purity and the gods in a south Indian temple:

> ... given that purity and pollution define one of the most important sets of conventions by which Hindus can show respect, it follows that the inestimable purity of the gods must be respected as if it were violable. Purity and pollution, in other words, define an idiom by which respect to the gods is shown (1979:470).

30. This belief is reinforced by the belief in the evil eye (nazar) motivated by envy. A person who envies another's food can, unconsciously, by glancing at the food, cause the eater to contract innumerable digestive ailments. The choice cuisine in Puṣṭimārgi temples is particularly susceptible to nazar of this kind.

31. In this respect compare Burghart's study of the 'secret' vocabularies relating to prepared foods used by ascetics of the Rāmānandī Sect:

> If we accept, therefore, the standard definition of communication as referring not to the sending of messages but to the sharing of messages then we can understand that the Great Renouncers not only restrict severely the sharing of certain kinds of food with householders but they also restrict the sharing of words about the food which is not shared (1980: 21).

32. This is really part of a much wider though little studied theme of egalitarian values in Indian culture and society. See, in particular, Parry (1974, pp. 95-121) and Pocock (1973).

33. Informants suggested that it was for this reason that women do not need to wear the distinctive 'U' shaped tilak of the sect.

34. Whereas purity cannot be transmitted through contact, the spiritual attributes of prasād can. Prasād which comes into contact with

unoffered food is said to convert the latter into prasād. As one priest explained: 'If some bhog is placed before Ṭhākurjī and it becomes prasād, then the priest should not touch bhog with his prasādī hand. He should first wash his hands; otherwise the bhog will be transformed into prasād'.

35. See CVV (p. 93).

36. See DBVV (pp.259-260).

37. See CVV (p.181).

38. Whenever Ṭhākurjī is offered bhog, the containers should always be completely full, an expression of the devotee's overflowing bhāva. In this respect, see the kīrtan translated in Chapter VI, p.192.

39. Cf. an analysis of the food offering in Assamese Vaishnavism by Hayley (1980; especially pp. 115f.).

CHAPTER VIII

THE MOUNTAIN OF RICE:
THE PUṢṬIMĀRGI TEMPLE AS A REDISTRIBUTIVE CENTRE

The permanent organisation of the Vallabha Sect rests firmly upon an extensive network of sect-managed temples. At the local level the temple serves as a principal centre of communal sectarian activity; beyond it is normally affiliated to one of the Seven Houses of the Sampradāya and hence under the traditional jurisdiction of a Mahārāja of the Vallabha Dynasty. In this chapter I propose to examine the organisation and internal workings of the Vallabha temple by developing a systematic framework within which to understand its actual operation as well as the conceptual themes which inform it. I shall consider Lord Krishna (temple image) in his symbolic role of redistributor and his abode (temple) in its symbolic and actual capacity as a redistributive centre.

Others have stressed the importance of Hindu temples as centres of redistribution. In a study of endowments of money and villages to the south Indian shrine of Tirupati during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Burton Stein has shown that the temple had important economic functions in the agrarian structure of medieval south India (1960, pp. 163-176). Although a proportion of each endowment went towards increasing the number and magnificence of the deity's ritual services (performed in the names of specific donors), by far the greater proportion of each endowment was utilised by temple managers to develop irrigation facilities in temple villages around Tirupati (ibid., p. 164). Stein also remarks on the extensive trade in consecrated food. As the temple prospered, priests received greater amounts of prasād in lieu of salaries which they could

sell off to pilgrims. There were official prasād leaseholders who grew wealthy by securing supplies from donors and priests and selling them at a profit to pilgrims (ibid., pp. 171-73).

In a recent article, Appadurai and Breckenridge have challenged the prevailing assumption that the south Indian temple is to be seen merely as a reflection of its broader social context and argue instead that,

> Although, taken separately, many features of the south Indian temple mimic other institutional aspects of south Indian society, the way in which these features are synthesized in the temple is unique, both in cultural and structural terms. (1976:189).

The authors advance the following principles. First, that temple ritual is to be understood as an expression of homage to a deity conceived as a sovereign; second, that the reigning deity stands at the centre of a set of moral and economic transactions which constitute a redistributive process; third, that endowments provide the organisational framework within which the donors acquire distinct shares in its ritual and economic benefits; and fourth, that conflicts between shareholders are resolved by an outside agency whose duty it is to 'protect' the temple, thus satisfying a primary requirement for human claims to royal status (ibid.,p.190).

The authors' scheme for understanding the cultural principles that underlie the workings of the south Indian temple is particularly useful, though I should point out that their case differs in some of its substantive details from our own. This is perhaps only to be expected since theirs is, as they stress, a generalised south Indian paradigm, whereas ours, besides being outside the south Indian cultural area, also refers to a specific sect with its special cultural idiosyncracies. The conceptualisation and treatment of the deity as a paradigmatic sovereign and of worship (pūjā) as an expression of homage and bonded servitude rewarded by a dispensation of royal 'honours' among courtiers (temple staff) and worshippers (presumably subjects), though an element in havelī worship, is much too lofty and formal to be a dominant feature. Lord Krishna stands supreme, but this

aspect of his character is concealed in the form of an infant living among close kin, neighbours and friends. The worship is tempered by an atmosphere of domestic intimacy in which feelings of spontaneous love over-ride notions of humble allegiance and loyalty to a remote sovereign. Nevertheless, there are some significant parallels and the present study shows its indebtedness to the above-mentioned authors.

By way of introduction it will be helpful to outline some of the key issues and assumptions arising from our approach to the Vallabha temple as a redistributive centre.

1. I have emphasised throughout this study that one of the distinctive features of Vallabha temple worship is the sedulous and luxurious manner in which devotees minister to their deities. The practice has been largely responsible for stirring up accusations of worldly extravagance from outsiders, particularly with regard to food and feasting.

2. Following this, it can be assumed that if temple worship is to approach an objective of aesthetic and conspicuous magnificence, then it requires a regular and substantial inflow of offerings and voluntary services as well as the existence of an organisational structure adequately geared to their encouragement and effective appropriation.

3. Hitherto, I have interpreted temple transactions primarily in reciprocal terms, that is, as establishing or expressing distinct personal relationships between individual devotees and deity. But on shifting our attention to the total flow of offerings and the wide range of separate yet interdependent tasks which sevā involves, a redistributive model is appropriate. For one thing, full temple sevā, being a combination and succession of numerous individual acts of sevā, is essentially a cooperative endeavour whereby different categories of sevak, including priests, managers, donors, devotional singers, storekeepers, and so on, pool their respective skills and resources in a common effort to serve the deity. For another, by

virtue of their respective (partial yet spiritually complete) contributions to the continuing routine, all participants are entitled to shares in its products, the principal form being the consecrated food remnants of the deity. As such, the temple institution is to be regarded as being organised around and geared to a redistributive process involving the appropriation of services and goods (offerings) to an allocative centre (the deity) and their conversion (consecration) and subsequent redistribution by persons authorised to act on the deity's behalf.

4. Hence, to participate in temple worship is to enter an intricate web of transactional relationships centering primarily on the deity, but also involving a wide range of subsidiary transactions with fellow devotees. It is through such participation that devotees assume differential status-roles within the context of the temple institution.

5. Following Appadurai and Breckenridge it is pertinent to consider the extent to which the organisation of the Vallabha temple reflects traditional Indian forms of redistribution and the extent to which it exhibits structural and ideological autonomy.

6. Of crucial significance in the attribution of meaning to temple transactions is the conceptual and legal status of the divine image as an interacting 'person' capable of receiving and enjoying all property made over to him in the form of endowments. This has also led to tensions concerning the proxy rights vested in humans over the deity and his temple abode.

7. Finally, I suggest that in Vallahba temple worship we have an intriguing variation on the theme of great provider well-known to those anthropologists who have studied the roles of big-men, chiefs and divine kings. In a spiritual sense gods are the great providers <u>par excellence</u>. This is certainly so in the case of Lord Krishna. It is in the temple context that the spiritual sentiments of loving affection and self-dedication on

the part of worshippers and of boundless grace on the part of the deity receive such rich and voluminous expression in the form of material offerings and leavings, particularly at the annual festival of Annakūṭ, the Mountain of Food. An analysis of this festival will reveal the principles underlying commensal behaviour in a sectarian temple context.

The Magnificent Sevā

Vallabha temple worship is materially lavish and physically energetic, maintained by generous donations from the faithful and the diligence of functionaries skilled in culinary and decorative arts. I have described in detail how the deity is regularly served with a wide variety of choice foods, dressed in rich garments, adorned with garlands of fresh flowers and precious ornaments, and surrounded by elaborately constructed scenes reminiscent of the Braj līlās. As a helpless child, Bāl Krishna requires unceasing care and affection: as a manifestation of the Supreme Lord, he deserves the best that his worshippers can afford. The sevā is both costly and labour intensive. Admittedly, material standards of excellence vary considerably from temple to temple; a disparity is clearly evident among the havelīs in Ujjain. And yet in all temples aesthetic excellence is a goal which sevaks should strive to achieve. A darshan that is visibly impressive is considered to be instrumental in exciting deep devotional sentiments, and, by virtue of its having been accomplished at some cost and effort, becomes a palpable manifestation of the overwhelming love and dedication of those responsible for its creation.

The pre-eminent sectarian shrine of Shrī Nāthjī at Nāthdwāra stands as an archetype of unsurpassed splendour. Devotees in Ujjain urged me to visit the place by evoking scenes of commendable extravagance where 'ghee flows like water' and wealthy Gujarātī Mahājans offer lakhs of rupees at a time.[1] Like most pilgrims, I also included within my tour a visit to the great storehouse, Shrī Kṛṣṇa Bhaṅḍār, for darshan of the famous wells brimming with ghee, and the two querns, one of solid gold and the other of

silver, used for grinding the rare substances of saffron and musk which tincture the deity's ointments and meals.[2] In 1966 it was officially estimated that some Rs. 900,000 were annually being spent by the temple on food ingredients alone (Nāthdwāra Temple Board, 1966: 34). Also remarkable is the scale and extent of the trade in consecrated food. Shrī Nāthjī is plied with delicacies far in excess of his insubstantial needs such that his considerable remains can be retrieved and presented to his admirers as tokens of his favour. This mahāprasād is in high demand among pilgrims; on returning home they are expected to share it among fellow initiates, who then pass it on to others in ever diminishing quantities to make it go further.

One can recognise in the more prosperous and prestigious sectarian temples like Shrī Nāthjī a highly developed organisation of ritual services exhibiting a multiplication and differentiation of personnel and duties. There are thirty-three departments (vibhāg), some specialising in administrative and others in ritual matters. The former, constituting a staff of close on six hundred, are supervised by a manager (adhikārī) and deal with such matters as the collection and utilisation of endowments, the overseeing of temple properties, the accommodation of pilgrims in eight temple-owned dharmashālās, the keeping of accounts, the distribution of prasād, and even the maintenance of a motor garage. On the ritual side there are over six hundred priests and lesser ritual functionaries headed by the chief priest (mukhiyā). Generally speaking, the administrative workers (karmacārīs) receive fixed amounts of cash on a monthly basis with additional gifts of prasād at large festivals. For priests and other ritual functionaries, however, prasād is the dominant medium of remuneration, varying in amount, kind and regularity of dispensation according to the respective ritual statuses of functionaries.[3] Priests, for example, receive fixed daily shares[4] with extra at festivals, and always over and above the needs of their immediate families so that the surplus can be converted into cash by passing it on to pilgrims or by supplying leaseholders at a pre-arranged

rate who then re-sell it to pilgrims from shops and stalls in the market places around the temple. Other sevaks receive smaller quantities at special festivals when they offer their services on a voluntary basis.

Jindel has completed a detailed sociological study of the temple town of Nāthdwāra (1976). Of particular interest is her description of a system of patron-client relationships existing between the temple and families of certain service and artisan castes (Carpenters, Florists, Painters, Washermen, Potters, Tailors) whose ancestors were encouraged to settle in the town in order to supply the developing shrine with necessary ritual articles (Jindel, 1976, Chapter 7). Taking the case of the Potters, we note that there are in all thirty-eight families who claim an hereditary right to supply the temple with earthenware pots. All raw materials are dispensed freely by the temple in the form of fixed quantities of clay computed on a yearly basis with extra thrown in at festivals when the demand for pots rises.[5] In return, the Potters receive cash payments on quantities of pots set by the temple administrators and customarily fixed at a rate which is significantly below the going market price. Despite this, Jindel notes that the Potter families are reluctant to break off their association with the temple since it provides a stable form of income, besides the fact that the clay supplied by the temple is surplus to requirements and can therefore be used to make extra pots for sale in the market place. The hereditary personal relationship between the temple deity and Potter families is further reinforced through gifts granted by the patron at festivals. Every year the whole Potter community is given a feast of prasād, at Chappan Bhog the leader receives sixteen laḍḍūs for distribution among his castemates, and at Annakūṭ the Potters receive a fixed quantity of sakharī prasād, being a share of the Mountain of Food.

Using a local term, Jindel refers to this time-honoured pattern of relations as the 'Birat system', aspects of which are readily associated with what in the anthropological literature is known as the 'jajmāni system'.

The connection between temple organisation and the traditional system of agrarian redistribution is of some interest and is examined here with specific reference to the temple of Shrī Nāthjī at Nāthdwāra.

The Temple and the Traditional Redistributive Economy

The so-called 'jajmāni system' has attracted attention principally because it has provoked a debate between those who, following Wiser (1958, xxi), view it as essentially egalitarian in character based on the harmonic interdependence of specialist castes, and those who stress its exploitative and inequalitarian character based on the politico-economic dominance of landowners over service castes (Gould, 1958; Beidelman, 1959). The issue is also one of substantivist versus formalist economics. Dumont, firmly in the former camp, has summarised the system (1980, pp. 97-108). Etymologically, he explains, the word jajmān means 'He who has a sacrifice performed... the master of the house who employs a Brahman to perform the sacrifice' (p. 97). But following more general sociological usage the system can be conveniently considered at three successive levels. First, the interfamilial, '... each family has a family of specialists at its disposal for each specialized task' (p. 98). Relations between families are reciprocal (service in return for service or for occasional payments in kind) and stem from a principle of functional interdependence. Second, and moving to a total village context, the range of relationships becomes increasingly complex, though the system is normally reducible to two general categories: landowners (Dumont refers to the 'dominant caste') and families belonging to dependent castes 'whose members obtain direct or indirect access to the means of subsistence through personal relationships with members of the dominant caste, in virtue of the functions which they are fit to perform and which the dominant caste requires' (pp.106-107). At this level, the system is essentially one of cooperation and redistribution: all families contribute their various skills to the total agricultural and

socio-ritual life of the village and thereby become entitled to shares in the total produce at times of harvesting. For Dumont, the manner of redistribution is hierarchical (as distinct from 'exploitative' or 'egalitarian') being oriented towards the satisfaction of the needs of all who enter the system. The needs of each are conceived to be qualitatively different depending on caste. By way of illustration, he invites us to imagine the village threshing floor in traditional India:

> ...we would see the farmer measuring one after the other the king's share, that of the person who is found to have a superior right over the land, then the shares of the Brahman who serves as domestic priest, the barber and so on, until perhaps he reaches the untouchable ploughman. (p.104).

A similar picture has been painted by the social historian, W.C. Neale, in his description of the village economy in eighteenth and nineteenth century Awadh (1957, pp.218-236). The basis of village society was the grain heap. All villagers, by virtue of the services they performed and their statuses, received remunerations in the form of shares of the cultivators' grain heaps piled on the community threshing floor at harvest times. Throughout the year, service and artisan castes performed prescribed tasks receiving no significant payment for services rendered until the harvest when the means of subsistence for the rest of the year was distributed. Neale enumerates three stages in the process of redistribution. First, from the standing crop; second, from the undivided grain heap of each cultivator; and third, from the heaps after the cultivator had contributed to the Rājā's heap. As Neale admits, the distribution was particularly intricate; though he manages to provide a useful summary (1957, pp.224-225).

The mention of the Rājā's share introduces a third level from which to view the system extending above and beyond the village linking the cultivator ultimately with the king, albeit through a sometimes lengthy chain of intermediaries. The nature of the king's rights in relation to

the land and its produce were largely misunderstood by British administrators. In one sense the king was the 'Protector of the Land' (bhūpāl), in another he was 'Lord of the Land' (bhūpati) which can best be interpreted as 'one having a superior right over the land and its produce'. Stated somewhat cautiously for the moment we can say that the revenue payment to the king was both a demonstration and an acknowledgement on the part of the subject of the king's superior right over the land and its produce. Theoretically or symbolically, the entire grain heap, being the produce of the land, is within the overall 'ownership' of the king insofar as it is the king who exercises a pre-eminent right over it. It is significant here that in the village we have a reduced version of the kingdom. Dominant families reproduce the functions of the king at the village level, having eminent rights over the land, power to grant land for cultivation and to employ members of other castes as specialists and agriculturalists, power of justice, and so on (Dumont, 1980, pp.162-163).

Forms of land tenure have varied over time and from region to region in India. Nevertheless, the following basic categories may be distinguished with reference to medieval northern India:

1. Crown lands, being those lands directly under the supervision of the king. The revenue was collected from the cultivators by the king's revenue officer who deducted a commission and deposited the rest in the royal treasury or granary.

2. Lands (including villages, parts of villages and individual plots) which the king assigned to individuals as a reward for services rendered and/or in lieu of salary. The grant did not amount to a right over the land as such, but a right to collect revenue.

3. Lands granted to individuals as charitable endowments; usually to Brahmans, holy men and temple deities. The granting of such lands was common practice during the medieval period in north and south India. By

making such land grants the king hoped to acquire merit, worldly prestige, and blessings for his military expeditions. Nowadays a clear distinction is made between those endowments made to persons (e.g. head of a monastery = mahant) and those made over to temple deities. Whereas the mahant has extensive proprietary rights over the land and its produce, including the usufruct and the right to create derivative tenures in regard to endowed properties, lands granted to temple deities are made in the names of deities with human agents acting in the capacity of trustees or managers. But the distinction was and is not always clear and has led to a large amount of litigation in the present century.

The image of Shrī Nāthjī, as with many of the sectarian deities, has been the subject of numerous endowments. In 1593 AD we know that Viṭṭhalnāthjī had informed the Darbar at Delhi that he had purchased the mauza (a village and its cultivated land) of Jatīpurā by Govardhan Hill, whereupon the Emperor Akbar issued a farman recognising the right of Viṭṭhalnāthjī to reside there and to construct buildings, gardens, cow-sheds and workshops for the maintenance of the temple of Govardhan Nāthjī. The mauza was granted in perpetuity and exempt from all revenue payments so that the Gosain (Viṭṭhalnāth) need never be disturbed by revenue officers demanding taxes and that he might, therefore, in a spirit of gratitude for this extension of Imperial favour, feel inclined to pray for the good of the kingdom.[6] Later, in 1633 AD, Shah Jahan issued a similar order confirming the grant for the benefit of Viṭṭhalnāth's descendants and for the upkeep of the temple (Jhaveri, farman VI). By 1671, however, the descendants had become uncertain of receiving Imperial security and protection under Aurangzeb and so transported the image to Rājasthān where the deity chose the village of Siarh as his residence. The details have been vividly described by Tod:

> When Arungzeb proscribed Kaniya, and rendered his shrines impure throughout Vrij, Rana Raj Sing "offered the heads of one hundred thousand Rajpoots for his service," and

> the god was conducted by the route of Kotah and Rampoora to Mewar. An omen decided the spot of his future residence. As he journeyed to gain the capital of the Seesodias the chariot-wheel sunk deep into the earth and defied extrication; upon which the Sookuni (augur) interpreted the pleasure of the god, that he desired to dwell there. This circumstance occurred at an inconsiderable village called Siarh, in the fief of Dailwara, one of the sixteen nobles of Mewar. Rejoiced at this decided manifestation of favour, the chief hastened to make a perpetual gift of the village and its lands, which was speedily confirmed by the patent of the Rana. Nat'hji (the god) was removed from his car, and in due time a temple was erected for his reception, when the hamlet of Siarh became the town of Nat'hdwara... (Tod, 1914, vol. I, p.416)

In documents issued by the Rānā of Udaipur in 1672 and 1680, the endowment of Siarh was confirmed until such time as Shrī Nāthjī will be returned to Braj at which time the land will revert to the descendants of those to whom it originally belonged.[7] Thereafter the grant was confirmed with each new reign. An order of the Mahārānā dated 1809 AD gives further details of the endowment:

> Sri Mahrana Bhima Sing-ji commanding.
> To the towns of Sri-ji or to the (personal) lands of the Gosaen-ji, no molestation shall be offered. No warrants or exactions shall be issued or levied upon them. All complaints, suits, or matters, in which justice is required, originating in Nat'hdwara, shall be settled there; none shall interfere therein, and the decisions of the Gosaen-ji I shall invariably confirm. The town and transit duties, the assay (purkhaya) fees from the public markets, duties on precious metals (kasoti), all brokerage (dulali), and dues collected at the four gates; all contributions and taxes of whatever kind, are presented as an offering to Sri-ji... (see Tod, 1914, vol. I, pp.412-413)

What was remarkable in the case of charitable endowments like those mentioned above is the considerable extent to which the king alienated his rights over the land by transferring them to the deity and the deity's human agent (see Dumont, 1980, pp.156-158). Rights alienated included:

1. The right to collect and utilise revenue collected from lands in and around Nāthdwāra.
2. The right to all excise and customs duties levied on goods entering the town and sold in the markets (to be employed in the deity's ritual services).

3. The right to administer justice and to punish offenders (in this respect Tod described the town as a sanctuary for criminals, op. cit. pp.419-420).
4. That the above rights continue in perpetuity or until such time as the deity returns to Braj.

In theory, and to a significant degree in practice, the deity and the resources he commands are separate from the royal revenue and judicial systems. The territory and its produce assigned to the deity functions as if it were a little kingdom having a high degree of autonomy. The deity, standing at the apex of the revenue hierarchy in this little kingdom is the ultimate receiver and redistributor. We shall see later in this chapter that this has sometimes led to serious tensions concerning entitlements and the overlapping of rights since, in the final analysis, three kings have co-existed: the Mahārānā of Udaipur (now replaced by the State Government of Rājasthān), the Tilkāyat-Mahārāja and Ṭhākurjī.

But is the temple domain at Nāthdwāra to be regarded merely as a little kingdom ruled by a deity instead of a chief or subsidiary officer of the king (albeit something of a special case insofar as the king alienates more of his rights than usual)? Furthermore, descending from the lofty position of the king to that occupied by the landowning families who reproduce his royal functions at the village level, would it not be feasible to relate the division of labour and the redistributive economy of the village with the division of services informing the organisation of the temple? On the one hand, the deity can be viewed as a sovereign enthroned in splendour and living ostentatiously on the produce of his subjects. On the other hand, retaining the domestic atmosphere of the Puṣṭimārgi haveli, Lord Krishna, the foster-son of a subsidiary chieftain, occupies pride of place in a household where various servants (sevaks) come from time to time to perform necessary domestic and ritual services. It is perhaps significant in this respect that one Mahārāja, referring to his position in relation

to an haveli in Ujjain, described himself as a jajmān and proceeded to identify different temple functionaries in terms of their roles in a Vedic sacrifice of which he was the patron.

This reminds us of a further possible comparison. On the one hand we have the heaps of consecrated food dedicated to the deity, who accepts a portion and leaves the rest to be distributed among his sevaks as tokens of his favour. On the other hand, we have the grain heap over which the Rājā exercises a pre-eminent right, from which he receives a portion which serves to demonstrate his superior right over the produce of the land, the rest being redistributed among his subjects. Both systems have somewhat similar principles of pre-eminence and precedence.

The extent to which such parallels are justified is arguable. My own view is that it is necessary to exercise caution for the case might easily be overstated. I have examined temple organisation in terms of its place within the wider socio-economic context, the way it fits into the traditional revenue system. But I have not examined temple organisation in its own terms, from the inside as it were. Appadurai and Breckenridge have rightly pointed out the distortions created as a result of applying a facile reflectionist hypothesis to the material and have argued instead that the total domain of relationships centering on the temple has its own cultural and structural homogeneity and uniqueness. Viewed in this way the families of Potters, Washermen, Painters, Florists, etc., at Nāthdwāra are part of a more inclusive system that contains all categories of participant (not necessarily caste categories) that enter into the transactional life of the temple, including priests, donors, pilgrims, managers, and administrators, all of whom receive rewards and remunerations in the form of cash and kind, on regular or sporadic bases, in return for services rendered or money endowed. Perhaps the most notable feature of the organisation is its absolute centricity with regard to the deity. All transactions are ultimately made through Ṭhākurjī. It is the god who receives all gifts

and services, who enjoys and commands all resources. Moreover, all goods, actions, and persons utilised in the service of the deity are conceived as becoming divine in nature. The transactions involved in this system are circumscribed by principles of detachment, disinterestedness and altruism. The system is certainly a religious one, but the language of religion is not principally one of hierarchy as it applies to the socio-ritual domain (Dumont, 1980:108), it is more a language of the heterodox sect inspired by the teachings of a renouncer who points the way to a particularly materialistic form of inner-worldly renunciation.

I shall attempt an analysis of the ideological principles informing temple organisation by focusing on the major festival of Annakūṭ. But first I provide some ethnographic details of havelī organisation in Ujjain.

The Redistributive Process in Ujjain Havelīs

In marked contrast to the Nāthdwāra temple, the havelīs of Ujjain are small in scale, each having only a few ritual and administrative functionaries who are obliged to perform a wide range of tasks which would normally be assigned to different persons and departments. The havelīs stand to the temple of Shrī Nāthjī as households to a grand palace, and yet symbolically they contain elements of both. Just as Lord Krishna conceals his majesty in the form of a little child, so his palatial abode is disguised as a humble household. But despite their small size and the fact that they are overshadowed by famous temples like Mahākāl, Harsiddhi, and Gopāl Mandir, the Vallabha temples are popularly attended by a small but enthusiastic community of Vaiṣṇavas, while the sevā remains impressively lavish when compared with worship performed in other Hindu temples of similar size and prestige. They have very little in the way of agricultural land; instead they have been markedly dependent upon the support they have received from urban business families who have in the past bequeathed houses and shops, rents from which now provide the havelīs with a regular income. Much of the income, however, derives from less reliable sources,

namely monetary donations. For this reason the successful functioning of the Ujjain haveliīs depends to a large extent on the amount and regularity of incoming monetary endowments,and the ability of temple functionaries to create a mood of confidence so that donors will feel sure that their offerings will be utilised in an honest and effective manner. Setting aside differences of scale and value of properties possessed, the haveliīs of Ujjain share significant affinities with their more eminent and wealthier counterparts in matters of organisation and operation.

The Deity and the Transactional Context. The deity stands in the innermost room at the conceptual and focal centre of the temple. The metaphysical status and character of the temple as the heavenly abode of Krishna has already been discussed in detail in Chapter V. It might be objected that I am clouding the issue by positing the role of the deity as an interacting 'person'. Surely, if we are to understand the actual workings of the temple the focus should be on those persons who actually wield power in controlling and commanding resources vested in the name of the deity? This I do not doubt. My point is simply that if we hope in addition to understand the meanings which devotees themselves ascribe to temple transactions, then the treatment of the temple image as a sentient being is crucial to the analysis. The conceptual status of the deity has also been discussed at length in Chapter V. Appadurai and Breckenridge have attested to the notion of the divinity as a corporeal being, noting how it is infused with life at a ceremony of installation, bathed, anointed, dressed, fed, and adorned. This state of life is permanent unless the image is dishonoured, in which case the deity is thought to leave the figure necessitating a rite of renewal (1976:190). It is significant that Puṣṭimārgis rationalise the personification of the image to such an extent that they consider it to be an essential form of Lord Krishna and not merely the deity's temporary abode. It is forever Krishna, even if dishonoured or broken. Hence there

is no need for a rite of renewal. If sevā is discontinued, Krishna himself goes hungry and suffers from the neglect of his worshippers.

The notion that all Hindu deities are animate beings is reinforced by law. Temple images are regarded as possessing a 'juristic personality' and hence as having the capacity to receive and enjoy endowments made in their names, including the temple building and its contents.[8] The fact that the deity by all worldly appearances assumes such a stony silence is a frequent point of tension, for who has the authority, either ritual or legal, to speak and act on the deity's behalf? In Puṣṭimārga, the Mahārāja's role is crucial, but I shall leave consideration of that until later.

Categories of Sevak. Within the temple a strict separation is maintained between those worshippers who perform bāharī-sevā and those who perform bhītarī-sevā. This is paralleled by a traditional differentiation between ritual and administrative functionaries which is exhibited in such a developed form at Nāthdwāra. Consistent with these distinctions, we can identify three categories of participant (excepting the Mahārāja):

1. Priests. I described the duties of the priest in Chapter VI. I also specified the essential qualifications for entry into the priesthood, viz. the candidate must belong to one of three Brahman subcastes (Audīcha, Sanchorā, Girinārā), he must be a full initiate of the Sampradāya, and his appointment must be confirmed by the Mahārāja under whose traditional jurisdiction the svarūp temple lies.

The chief priest or mukhiyā may have one or several subsidiary priests to assist him. Much depends on the size of the temple and the intensity of the sevā. In temples where there are many priests, ritual ranking is highly developed. As a rule the priestly hierarchy corresponds to degrees of proximity to the deity. Those priests allowed to enter the inner sanctum and to perform caraṇasparsha of the image occupy a higher and more privileged rank than those who prepare sweetmeats in Bāl Bhog. This ritual ranking

is expressed in a pyramid of command with the Mahārāja at the apex, followed by the mukhiyā, his immediate assistants, the cooks, water-bearers, and so on. A retired priest from Nāthdwāra described his own status and responsibilities in the following words:

> I performed the sevā of Shrī Nāthjī for forty-eight years but nowadays my health is not so good so I have asked Shrī Gosvāmī Tilkāyat to appoint my son in my place. I worked in Shrī Nāthjī as a bhītariyā doing personal sevā. I also used to do caraṇasparsha and held the special responsibility of bathing (the svarūp).... The mukhiyā is the supervisor of six bhītariyās, under him we do sevā. We pass the sevā articles to him as he needs them. Only those bhītariyās who have received Gosvāmījī's permission have the right to do caraṇasparsha. Other sevaks cannot do it.... When he is present, the Gosvāmī Mahārāja attends to Shrī Nāthjī. But if he is absent, then we have the right to do caraṇasparsha.

Thus within this particular religious tradition priestly ranking is a matter of privilege and precedence based on relative degrees of intimacy vis-à-vis the deity.[9]

As sevaks priests do not regard themselves as workers and wage-earners. They receive fixed amounts of cash per month[10] which is supplemented by daily supplies of prasād in quantities above their immediate family needs such that the surplus can be passed on to devotees in return for cash.[11] In addition, many priests live in rent-free lodgings belonging to temple estates.

I should mention briefly an interesting aspect of the relationship between priests and Mahārājas. In my conversations with several priests I noticed that whereas my informants tended to speak respectfully of the Mahārājas in their capacity as spiritual leaders, they were rather less inclined to acknowledge their competence in the performance of priestly duties. When Mahārājas and their sons visit Ujjain they are normally invited to perform ārati in place of the mukhiyā. Sometimes a Mahārāja will perform shṛṅgār and bhog sevā for one darshan, or even for a whole day, in which case he is expected to provide the necessary food ingredients and at least one item of shṛṅgār. But because he is unlikely to be fully conversant with the niceties of sevā as observed in a particular temple, he tends to

seek the advice and cooperation of the mukhiyā. One priest explained that on such occasions the mukhiyā may formally refuse to divulge the relevant information on the pretext that to do so would be tantamount to giving away his livelihood. At this point the Mahārāja invariably makes him some recompense in the form of a gift of cash or a precious ornament. This ritual encounter betrays an underlying tension. Some priests were quick to point out to me specific instances of incompetence shown by certain Mahārājas, of their lack of ritual knowhow, and of their failure to meet their obligations by providing the wherewithal for sevā. On one such occasion priests backed by a temple manager contrived to prevent some visiting Gosvāmīs from entering the nijmandir until the latter agreed to provide the ritual paraphernalia and to make a gift to the deity of an ornament comprising at least 10 grams of gold. On another occasion a young Gosvāmī refused an invitation to perform Rājbhog ārati because, so he maintained, on the previous day the priest, an elderly man of many years' experience, had insinuated that he (the Gosvāmī) did not know how to perform ārati properly and had had the audacity to try to teach him the rules of sevā. The old priest remained adamant and refused to apologise. The darshan was delayed in the hope that the Gosvāmī would change his mind. In an attempt to break the stalemate a young priest approached the Gosvāmī and begged him to attend for ārati. The Gosvāmī replied by quoting a couplet from Tulsīdās's version of the Rāmāyana:

> Do not go where you are not respected
> Even if gold falls like rain.

To which the young priest delivered a riposte from the Shāstras:

> It is up to the superior man to forgive the faults of his inferiors.

The Gosvāmī did finally preside at the festival, though some ill-feeling remained on both sides.

Priests are generally disposed to see and present themselves as the sole bearers of a sectarian tradition comprising a highly specialised

knowledge of ritual procedures and techniques. Mahārājas are not priests, although they are the only persons other than priests who are qualified to participate in bhītarī-sevā. In their readiness to criticise the Mahārājas for their ignorance of certain aspects of devotional worship one can perhaps detect a degree of resentment or irritability on the part of priests at the occasional intrusion of Mahārājas into their private domain. But perhaps even more important is the fact that their criticisms may be viewed as part of a strategy of self-justification and self-assertion. Priests stress their indispensability as the carriers of a tradition which but for them would be forgotten, they proclaim their own special privileges and skills, and they assert their own self-importance relative to the only other persons who are allowed to take over their duties. In this way priests as a body, a profession, preserve and vindicate their spiritual status, their ritual expertise and their special niche within the inner temple.

2. Managers.[12] Their duties include the maintenance of the temple and all of its properties (houses, shops and agricultural land), all aspects of temple finance, such as the collection of rents and endowments, their appropriation, the keeping and scrutinising of accounts, the remuneration of functionaries, the distribution of prasād, and the making of important decisions regarding the temple property. For these purposes meetings are called from time to time and are normally held in private. Managers receive no tangible rewards for their efforts since their work is, or at least should appear to be, entirely disinterested. Like the mass of lay devotees they receive portions of prasād at festivals or in return for donations. There is a general consensus that in order to become a manager the devotee must be a full initiate and must be appointed by a Mahārāja. In addition it is considered preferable for a manager to have some financial or administrative talents. Otherwise, there should be no bars on grounds of social and economic standing. Nevertheless, statistics concerning actual

managers in Ujjain are more revealing. The fifteen administrative offices held by local devotees as managers and trustees of temples are occupied by only nine persons. Of these, all are male; all belong to the trading castes (Bania or Bhattia), including Nīmā (three), Nāgar (two), Disawāl (one), Maheshvarī (one) and Bhattia (one); seven are engaged in family businesses (six having shops), including Cloth Merchants (three), Gold and Silver Merchants (two) and a Coal Merchant (one), together with a retired official of the Municipal Corporation and a Projectionist at a local 'Talkies'. Seven are frequently addressed by the title Seṭha, being a term of respect for a prominent businessman, seven are over sixty years old and two are over forty. In short, we can say that positions of managerial authority in the Ujjain haveliīs tend to be occupied by a relatively small number of elderly and prosperous businessmen.

3. Lay devotees. These include all temple-goers, many of whom perform various services voluntarily, and almost all of whom give donations of money, be it on a regular or occasional basis.

One of the more important participant roles is that of the store-keeper (bhaṅḍārin, f.). Besides being in charge of the bhaṅḍār, she supervises the special task-oriented groups of lay-devotees that work in the temple outhouses. One such group, consisting of between three and nine women, meets every morning to prepare the food ingredients before passing them on to the priest-cooks. Another group known as Phūlghar also meets every morning to prepare the deity's flower garland (phūlmālā) worn at Rājbhog. This group also prepares pān which is offered to the deity after meals and snacks. At festivals the demand for food ingredients, flower garlands and pān rises considerably. Remunerations vary from temple to temple and according to how often sevaks volunteer their services (daily or casually) and the kinds of task which they perform. Some bhaṅḍārins receive small amounts of prasād on a daily basis while helpers normally receive portions at festivals, the type and amount being left to the discretion of temple managers. The work is usually done by middle-aged

and elderly women, being those who have daughters-in-law at home to relieve them of domestic chores. The groups have the appearance of informal gatherings in which devotional songs are sung and gossip exchanged.

Kīrtanyās perform either on a daily or on an occasional basis such that some receive prasād regularly and others at holiday times. They also receive small gifts of cash from devotees while they are singing. Either a devotee places some small change on the songbook, or larger amounts of cash are handed to the priest who offers it to the deity by waving it in a clockwise manner in front of the image before passing it to the kīrtanyā. This rite, which resembles ārati in the performance, is a kind of propitiatory offering termed nyauchāvar or nichāvar.

Monetary Offerings. Cash offerings to be utilised in devotional service are called bheṅṭa, while the act of making a cash offering is considered to be an integral part of devotional worship known as bheṅṭa-sevā, being a form of vittajā-sevā, the dedication of wealth and property to Lord Krishna. There are various kinds of bheṅṭa, distinguished according to the specific purposes for which they are intended and/or the manner in which they are made.

Sanmukha-bheṅṭa is an offering made before the deity while the latter is granting public audience.[13] During darshan periods some worshippers throw small coins towards, but not inside, the inner sanctum. In one temple this practice is firmly discouraged by the priest on the grounds that it is disrespectful to Krishna, or as one devotee put it, 'You wouldn't throw money at your father, would you?' Instead, a slotted donation box (golak) is strategically placed adjacent to the deity in which worshippers are encouraged to place money. These boxes are to be found in all havelīs. Offerings that are designated sanmukha-bheṅṭa are not donated with a specific purpose in mind, rather they are intended 'for Ṭhākurjī' in a general sense. Occasionally, however, someone offers a larger donation in paper money, in which case the notes are placed on top of the donation box. The priest

sometimes responds by tossing a packet of consecrated pān to the donor.

The bulk of temple income derives from donations that are made in a more discreet manner to a temple manager or accountant (munīm) in a small office near the entrance. In return for his offering, the donor receives a numbered receipt, a carbon copy remaining with the manager. Details printed and written on receipts vary from one temple to another, though they normally include the name and address of the temple, donor's name, date, amount given, and the purpose of the offering as stated by the donor. Listed below are some of the more usual categories of offering recorded on receipts (the approximate amounts in cash that donors are expected to give for each kind of service are given in brackets).

1. Sāmagrī: the offering is used to purchase raw food ingredients (amounts vary, though usually in excess of Rs. 1).
2. Camacā or rabadī: a special preparation made from milk, sugar and flavouring (a minimum of Rs. 11).
3. Haṅdā or khīr: a sweet rice pudding of which baby Krishna is especially fond (a minimum of Rs. 15).
4. Utsav: offerings given for festivals as specified by the donor, such as Annakūṭ, Janmāṣṭamī, Ḍol-Utsav etc. (not less than Rs. 31).
5. Gaushālā: cash donated for the upkeep of temple cows and cowsheds.
6. Phūlpān-Sevā: cash donated for flowers and pān.
7. Manoratha: donations for special services sponsored on behalf of a particular devotee or group of devotees (Rs. 31 and over).
8. Guru-bheṇṭa: donations made to one or another of the guru-descendants of Vallabhācārya.

The transactions involved in bheṇṭa-sevā are circumscribed by an etiquette appropriate to the sacred orientation of the offering and the altruistic intentions of the donor. Ideally, devotees should be as unobtrusive as possible when making large donations. For this reason offerings are made in the temple office and not ostentatiously before Krishna and

the assembled worshippers. Cash is given in odd amounts of Rs. 1, 3, 5, 7, and so on, often with an additional 4 annas (being 25 paise or $\frac{1}{4}$ of a rupee), because odd numbers are considered to be auspicious, and, according to some of my informants, are less likely to appear as a fixed payment as in the case of a business deal. The donor 'makes an offering' (bheṅṭa-denā), he does not 'make a cash payment' (paisā-denā). The offering is given explicitly for the acquisition of materials to be utilised in the service of the deity and not for the purchase of consecrated remains. It follows that the donor does not normally receive an immediate return for his donation in the form of prasād, instead he collects prasād on the next or a subsequent day, that is, after the deity has received and enjoyed the offering. For the same reason a visitor to the temple who is offered a meal of prasād is not expected to offer an appropriate amount of cash as a form of payment, rather he may, if he so wishes, make a separate donation to the deity before he leaves, thus initiating a new transaction. Moreover, if a feast is to be held in the temple, guests are invited to attend to take darshan and not to take prasād because true sevaks go to the temple with the intention of serving Lord Krishna and not with the intention of filling their stomachs.

Ideally, then, offerings are distinguished from payments by the terminology surrounding their appropriation, by the manner in which they are made and by the element of delay before the receipt of the consecrated remnants. But this does not mean that the act of making an offering does not carry with it the expectation of a return in prasād. Generally, my informants saw no contradiction between the spirit of altruism which accompanies the offering and the expectation of a return. Perhaps one reason for this is that donors tend to distinguish between the deity and the temple managers as parties to their transactions; whereas Lord Krishna should not be expected to, or is not obliged to, bestow his grace on the donor, it is only right that the manager, or whosoever happens to be in charge of the distribution of prasād, should acknowledge receipt of the donor's offering

by making a return in the form of a fair portion of the consecrated remains. Donors have a clear idea as to what constitutes a fair share computed in terms of value equivalence between cash given and prasād received. Theoretically, prasād is priceless and so is not priced in monetary terms. But bhog is priced because in order to offer the deity a certain delicacy or a complete meal the donor needs to know how much cash will be required for the purchase of the necessary ingredients. Temples have scales of more or less fixed prices for bhog which tend to be carried over the process of consecration and applied to prasād.

Looking at the redistributive system as a whole we can see that the daily, seasonal and festival round is sustained by the pooled contributions of a variety of sevaks acting in diverse capacities for which they receive portions of the deity's food remains in acknowledgement of their individual and collective contributions to the sevā. Generally, amounts of prasād received tend to be proportional to the cash amount given as bheṅṭa or the kind and regularity of service performed. But there is another category of offerings which is distinguishable from the rest inasmuch as it brings to the fore the donor as an individual rather than as a member of a corporate body.

Manoratha. If he so desires, a devotee may decide to sponsor a special ritual service known as a manoratha entirely at his (or her) own expense. It is significant that the terminological stress is on the mental disposition of the individual donor known as the manorathī. Literally, manoratha means 'desire, wish, intention', and hence manorathī means 'one who has a desire...' (by implication) to sponsor a special service for the benefit and happiness of the deity. Services of this kind are numerous and include the preparation of a special sweetmeat as a treat for Ṭhākurjī, the sponsorship of a complete daily darshan such as Rājbhog or of an occasional darshan which need not be an essential part of the temple calendar. Examples of the latter have already been described in Chapter VI, including Pālnā, when Krishna is

rocked to-and-fro in a flower cradle, Caṅdan Colī, when he is smeared with a 'cooling' sandalwood paste, Chappan Bhog, when he is served a feast of fifty-six different preparations, and the many jhāṅkīs staged during the 'extra month' which falls every third year in the Hindu calendar.

But there is more to manoratha-sevā than an altruistic desire to please the deity. Informants offered more practical reasons for sponsoring services, the following being typical:

> Let us suppose that my eldest son is about to take his finals at Vikrama University. So I think to myself that if he passes then I will give Rs. 15 as a donation for Ṭhākurjī to take khīr. If, by Ṭhākurjī's grace, my son passes, then I must offer bheṇṭā as promised. If I give Rs. 15 at the time of Maṅgalā, then I should receive khīr after Rājbhog.

Manorathas are associated with the fulfilment of many kinds of worldly ambitions: the successful harvesting of the crop, the completion of a profitable business transaction, the finding of a suitable wife for one's son, recovery from disease, etc. In all senses, manoratha is best interpreted as a kind of vow. The manorathī resolves that if a desired event should come to pass, then he will sponsor a specific ritual service in recognition of, and as a gesture of gratitude for, the deity's timely intervention. The desired outcome is itself regarded as a manifestation of divine grace (Bhagavān kī kṛpā). Such vows are not uttered publicly, nor are they given formal expression in a prescribed ritual performance. Perhaps such actions would appear contrary to the disinterested spirit of sevā which condemns the performance of rituals designed to influence or persuade the deity to act in accordance with the devotee's personal desires. The manorathī merely determines in his mind what he will do if such-and-such happens, or so I was told. But who knows the manorathī's real intentions?

Finally, on completion of the manoratha, a priest delivers prasād to the home of the manorathī. This prasād goes appropriately by the name of samādhān or 'that which gives satisfaction', a sign that the sponsor's

wishes have been fulfilled.

Such services are held regularly and range from small donations of Rs. 11 to large sums for feasts of Rs. 1,000 and over.[14]

As a rule the more costly manorathas are sponsored by the more prosperous temple-goers, generally businessmen, among them temple managers. The bulk of such casual festivals in Ujjain are initiated by individuals, though it sometimes happens that a manager will allow two or more persons to bear the costs of a particular ritual service. For example, two devotees may jointly contribute bheṇṭa for Rāgbhog. Alternatively, friends and associates can organise forms of group sponsorship. I witnessed a manoratha of Phūlmaṇḍalī financed jointly by the women of Phūlghar at Rs. 65, and another manoratha held in a village temple near Ujjain celebrated in the name of a group of families belonging to a subcaste of Telīs (Oilpressers).

Briefly, the procedure is as follows. Someone decides to sponsor a manoratha, let us say a manoratha of Rājbhog. He approaches the temple manager and the two decide on a convenient date and estimate the cost. The manorathī hands a cash donation to the manager who writes out a receipt. The manager then makes the necessary arrangements. On the appointed day, the bhaṅḍārin dispenses items to the groups of volunteers for preliminary processing before passing them on to the priests in the inner-rooms who prepare the bhog and decorate the nijmandir. The manoratha culminates in the darshan which lasts between fifteen and twenty minutes. Afterwards, and depending upon the arrangements previously made by the manager and manorathī, either a priest delivers prasād of samādhān to the manorathī's home, or guests may be invited to partake of a feast in the temple hosted by the manorathī with the priests acting as servers.

It is tempting to distinguish manoratha from other temple rituals by regarding it as a private transaction between the individual manorathī and the deity, a personal gesture of thanks. In practice, however, it is a public affair, mainly because it sets in motion a complex redistributive

process which involves all temple-goers, including managers, priests, volunteers, and those who simply come for darshan. Furthermore, the roles of all participants in the temple are temporarily reoriented vis-à-vis the devotee turned manorathī.

This brings us to a second point, being that the manorathī's role is crucial as that of redistributor - a role he assumes on behalf of the deity - and as the overseer of the process he initiates. Remarking on a similar form of offering in south Indian temples, Appadurai and Breckenridge have stressed the pivotal role of the donor, referred to as yajamāna (sacrificer), in overseeing the redistribution of shares (1976:197). Although the term was seldom used in this context in Ujjain it has interesting affinities. Like the Vedic jajmān, the manorathī is the person who initiates a ritual and on whose behalf the ritual is performed. Indeed, the idea that other participants in the temple ritual are acting on the manorathī's behalf is demonstrated by the fact that he takes it upon himself to remunerate certain functionaries (priests and kīrtanyās) with gifts of cash in recognition of their specialised services. In effect, he commands the redistribution of the temple products for the duration of the ritual which he sponsors. In addition, it is up to the manorathī to make sure that all those devotees who have volunteered their services in the preparation of the ritual service are duly rewarded with prasād. I shall have more to say about the institution of manoratha in the following chapter.

Annakūṭ: The Mountain of Food

The great provider par excellence is Lord Krishna and the festival that gives the most tangible and emphatic testimony to this aspect of his personality is Annakūṭ, the mountain (kūṭ) of food (anna), also known as Govardhan Pūjā, or the worship of Govardhan Mountain.

It has been argued that the Govardhan festival had its origins in an ancient pastoral cult of the Braj area associated with serpent and cattle worship (i.e. fertility rites) and that this cult was later appropriated

by the medieval Vaiṣṇava sects mainly through the identification of Shrī Girirāj, the deified mountain, with Kṛṣṇa-Gopāl, the Cowherd-god (Vaudeville, 1980). Govardhan, whose literal meaning is 'an increaser of cattle', is conceived in Braj as 'a benevolent deity primarily concerned with the fertility of the cows and the welfare of the cowherd folk' (ibid., p. 1). Moreover, the worship of the mountain is widespread among both pastoral tribes and non-pastoral Hindus in northern India. By identifying certain primitive elements in the Govardhan legend, Vaudeville has begun to explain some intriguing features of the Puṣṭi tradition. Of particular interest is her suggestion that the deity, Shrī Nāthjī, whose black raised arm emerged from the mountain on Nāg-Pañcamī day and who was later declared by Vallabhācārya to be an 'essential form' of Lord Krishna in the act of bearing aloft the mountain, is actually an anthropomorphic version of an earlier half-anthropomorphic serpent deity (ibid., p. 7). Vaudeville's argument is mainly based on evidence drawn from literary and archaeological sources.

Given the presumed nature of its primitive elements, the adoption and adaptation of the Govardhan myth-cum-festival by the bhakti sect of Vallabhācārya appears to have been particularly thorough. Today, and probably since the time of Viṭṭhalnāthjī, Annakūṭ is the principal and most spectacular of the sect's festivals and one that has assumed a distinctive Puṣṭimārgi colouring. In Puṣṭimārga it is essentially a temple-based celebration that serves to epitomise the conceptual role of the deity as provider and his temple abode as a redistributive centre.

It is supposed by devotees that the festival celebrates an historic episode when the cowherd boy Krishna subdued the mighty Indra, king of the gods. The legend is anterior to Puranic accounts, though most Puṣṭimārgis are familiar with the story as narrated in the tenth book of the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa (see Vyasa, 1973, pp. 99-106). The following version, told by a Brahman devotee on the eve of Annakūṭ, represents a fairly accurate précis

of the Bhāgavata account:

> In bygone days King Nand and all the Brajvāsīs used to offer sacrifices to Lord Indra every year. But when Lord Krishna was only seven years old he asked his father: 'Why do you worship Indra? Who's he? Why don't you worship Govardhan Mountain instead? By doing so you will experience the living presence of Bhagavān.' So King Nand and all of the cowherds and cowherdesses gathered together many kinds of garments, ornaments and foodstuffs and set off from Gokul for Govardhan Mountain. As soon as they had arrived they began to prepare offerings piling them one on top of another until they reached as high as Govardhan's summit. Lord Krishna was delighted at this display of devotion, and, assuming the form of the Mountain, consumed the offerings.
>
> Meanwhile Lord Indra had grown very angry at this exhibition of impudence and decided to punish them by sending a great storm of hailstones and lightning. The storm raged for seven days and seven nights. But Lord Krishna lifted the Mountain and held it above them like an umbrella. In this way he sheltered all those Brajvāsīs who had sought his refuge. Indra's pride was crushed. He humbly begged the forgiveness of Lord Krishna. This is why we worship Govardhan Mountain.

The appropriation of this legend by the Sampradāya was mentioned in Chapter V. Briefly, in 1409 AD an arm of black stone emerged from Govardhan Hill, followed some sixty-nine years later by a face. At the same moment Vallabha was born in a forest near Campāraṇya. Later, Vallabha journeyed to Braj and identified the image as Shrī Govardhan Nāthjī (the Revered Bearer of Govardhan Mountain) and Indradaman (the Subduer of Indra).[15] Lord Krishna's victory over Indra was thereafter celebrated by Vallabha and his successors at the yearly festival of Annakūṭ which was considerably enhanced by Viṭṭhalnāthjī. I shall now describe certain episodes of the festival as I observed them first in Ujjain and later in Jatīpurā on the slopes of Govardhan Hill.

The Festival. Preparations begin three weeks early on the tenth day of the Light Half of the month of Āshvin (September/October) with the worship of the stoves in temple kitchens. The rite is known as bhaṭṭhī-pūjā.[16] It is performed solely by priests in private, the procedure being, by all accounts, similar to that followed in a variety of domestic and secular contexts, including the recital of appropriate mantras, the smearing of

the bhaṭṭhī with cow dung, the application of a vermilion tilak, firing, and the consignment of an item of first food to the fire as an offering to Agni.[17] From this time forth the priests are kept busy in preparing and storing the numerous dishes to be set before Ṭhākurjī at Annakūṭ, the kīrtanyās sing padas in praise of Girirāj, 'King of Mountains', and the managers and munīms collect the many cash donations that pour in for Annakūṭ sāmagrī.

Annakūṭ proper falls on the first day of the Light Half of the month of Kārṭṭik (October/November), being the second day of Divālī.[18] The festival, which I first observed in Ujjain, consists of two separate yet related episodes: Govardhan Pūjā and Annakūṭ.

1. Govardhan Pūjā. The havelīs remained closed during Maṅgalā. By the time I arrived at Temple C (about 10 a.m.) a large crowd of over one hundred men, women and children had already assembled in the inner courtyard.[19] They were gathered around a rope cordon and a boundary of turmeric which encircled a pile of cowdung. The dunghill, which was about to be worshipped as a svarūp of Govardhan Mountain, had been raised by priests the night before according to a traditional pattern described below.

A model of the mountain is shaped from cowdung and a 'mouth' (mukha) is depressed near the top on the front or northern side (uttara disha) as opposed to the rear or southern side (dakṣiṇa disha), the latter representing the 'tail' (pūñcha).[20] Twigs and leaves representing trees and shrubs are used to decorate the hill and four lamps of clarified butter are placed at four corners. In many havelīs a stone from Govardhan, Shrī Girirāj shilā, is placed on top of the mound as an appropriate svarūp of the Holy Mountain.

The ritual commenced when the congregation parted to allow the mukhiyā to enter the enclosure followed by his two priestly assistants, each bearing a tray containing the necessary ritual paraphernalia. They were accompanied thenceforth by the blowing of a conch shell and the ringing of a handbell. The mukhiyā then proceeded to worship the Mountain by pouring

various libations into its mouth, including water (Yamunā and Ganges), milk, and rose-water which overflowed and trickled down its sides collecting in a rectangular 'moat' around its base. Then he performed the customary forms of obeisance, applied a vermilion tilak and a few rice grains, and adorned Shrī Girirāj with a flower garland and saffron shawl. Sweetmeats along with tulasi leaves and pān were offered as bhog. The mukhiyā performed ārati as the congregation repeated several times the salutation 'Shrī Girirāj kī Dharaṇa kī Jaya' (Hail the Bearer of the King of Mountains!). At some stage during the performance the doors of the nijmandir were opened so that Shrī NāthjĪ could take darshan of Shrī Girirāj.[21] The mukhiyā and his assistants concluded their part for the time being by making several circumambulations (parikramās), keeping the dunghill to their right.

At the time I had no prior knowledge of Govardhan Pūjā such that I was quite unprepared for the excitement that was to follow. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed that the water-bearer had entered the temple by a rear doorway leading a cow. After a good deal of effort he managed to drag the reluctant beast into the arena forcing it to trample the dunghill, along with its copious libations, to a sludge. Just then the worshippers, many of whom had been pushing and straining to catch a glimpse of the proceedings, could be restrained no longer and rushed forward from all sides gathering handfuls of the mountain and scooping up some of the milky prasād. Others had begun to circumambulate the mountain while applying tilaks of cowdung to each others' brows. After a few minutes the mukhiyā returned with an armful of saffron-coloured shawls which he placed around the necks of his assistants, the water-bearer, the kīrtanyā, the temple manager and several members of the congregation. I later accompanied a few worshippers to the temple garden where we made three parikramās of the cowshed followed by three parikramās of a potted tulasi plant standing on a pedestal.

2. Annakūṭ. I returned to the temple in the late afternoon in time to join a party of about twenty-five men and women who were making parikramās

of the whole temple and singing kīrtans lauding the King among Mountains. Again a large crowd had gathered inside, this time awaiting the darshan of Annakūṭ. At last the curtains were drawn aside to reveal the deity looking down upon a sumptuous feast. The entire space between the inner sanctum and courtyard was occupied by buckets and wickerwork baskets filled with many varieties of sweetmeats and savouries.[22] One's gaze was inevitably drawn to the centre foreground where a great mound of boiled rice dominated the whole spread, an outstanding representation of the mountain of food offered to Lord Krishna by the people of Braj when he assumed the form of Govardhan Parvat.

Annakūṭ darshan is followed by much feasting in the Vallabha temples. No prasād should go to waste. Sakharī prasād is perishable and so must be distributed and consumed on the same or the following day. Everyone is entitled to a share of the mound of boiled rice and there is usually more than enough to go round. Much is consumed within the temple as part of a full meal of prasād. Annakūṭ is the main occasion on which temple functionaries and lay-helpers receive substantial rewards in prasād in recognition of their services. Dūdhghar and ansakharī prasād lasts for up to one month after preparation and is largely reserved for those devotees who hold receipts, having given cash donations beforehand. Either they collect prasād at the temple on the days following the festival or else they make arrangements for the prasād to be delivered to their homes.

Every year many Vaiṣṇavas travel from Ujjain to Nāthdwāra for Annakūṭ, returning with some of the precious mahāprasād of Shrī Nāthjī. A few sometimes travel much further to visit Shrī Nāthjī's original abode on Govardhan Hill in Braj.

The 'lotus-like mouth' (mukhārvinda), by means of which Krishna as Girirāj consumed the magnificent offerings of the gopas and gopīs, is a principal focus of pilgrimage in Braj. Many cults locate the mukhārvinda at the Mānasī Gangā, a large artificial tank in the village of Govardhan on the eastern side of the ridge (Vaudeville, 1980, pp. 8-9). During the

Rainy Season, and especially at Annakūṭ, many thousands of pilgrims visit Govardhan in order to take darshan of the 'glorious mouth' and to bathe in the tank as a prelude to making a parikramā of the hill. It is said that inestimable merits accrue to those sincere pilgrims who trudge the fourteen miles barefoot.[23]

Nevertheless, devotees of Vallabha Sampradāya locate the mukhārvinda at Jatīpurā on the other (western) side of the ridge from Govardhan, it being a simple cleft in the rock on the lower slopes. This is also the place where Shrī Nāthjī's face first appeared. At Jatīpurā, as at Govardhan, Annakūṭ is a particularly grand affair, for here the actual hill is worshipped rather than a cowdung effigy. As in the havelīs, the mukhārvinda is soaked with profuse libations of milk and presented with row upon row of baskets full of many varieties of cooked food. At one stage during the proceedings the Ṭhākurjī from a nearby havelī is carried in a palanquin in procession to take darshan of His other Form. The hill is also bathed in milk. Some pilgrims perform the entire parikramā carrying buckets leaking a continuous trail of milk.

Interpretation. Annakūṭ is a festival of abundance, of lavish giving and inordinate consumption. In this respect the Puṣṭimārgi version is somewhat in keeping with its non-Vaiṣṇava antecedent as a pastoral cult centred on the deified 'cattle-increaser' hill. When worshipped with generous offerings of cows and dairy produce, Govardhan becomes favourably disposed to the welfare of the cowherd folk whose wealth is measured in cows.[24]

Although worshipped throughout northern India by many peoples who have no sectarian connections, Govardhan Hill is regarded with a special reverence by the Krishnaite sects in general and the Vallabha sect in particular as an essential form of Lord Krishna. I shall confine myself to a consideration of the Govardhan festival as celebrated in the Vallabha temples. Annakūṭ is by far the most grandiose of the temple-based festivals involving the fullest mobilisation of functionaries, volunteers and material resources.

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested that rather than concentrate solely on reciprocal aspects of the devotee-deity relationship we should now focus on temple transactions *in toto*, in which case a redistributive model is particularly appropriate. The *sevā* of the temple deity is essentially a cooperative endeavour calling for the pooling of a wide variety of goods and services and the subsequent sharing out of its sanctified 'products' among all participants. Annakūṭ is in many ways the epitome of this redistributive process being a grand feast in which the temple deity occupies the role of great receiver and great provider. For this reason an examination of the festival should help to throw light on some significant cultural aspects of temple organisation and worship; in particular it will enable us to explore the commensal implications of the offering and what it reveals about the conceptual principles defining relationships among co-devotees as well as between the devotee and Krishna.

It is usual for anthropologists to explain the distribution of consecrated remnants solely in sociological terms. Either it is suggested that hierarchical or secular status considerations determine the order and method of distribution, or it is noted that there are certain ritual contexts in which normal status differences are temporarily disregarded by participants with the result that a degree of equality is established within an all-encompassing hierarchy. In a study of a rural south Indian devotional group affiliated to the Rāmānuja sect, Burkhart maintains that group commensality is an expression of members' 'special spiritual position as a corporate group *vis-à-vis* outsiders', and further that 'the idea of commensality is shown to be in direct opposition to the demonstration of hierarchy....when they worship together differences are minimized' (1974: 7). And yet in spite of the fact that members voice an egalitarian ideology, Burkhart explains how in their interpersonal behaviour they reflect and adapt themselves to a hierarchical social order reinforced by the secular status determinants of wealth and power.[25] Babb writes of similar tendencies in Chhattisgarhi worship. The distribution of the deity's

remains can have the effect of muting hierarchical differences, or conversely, the distribution may be manipulated in such a way that hierarchical differences are reasserted, e.g. by the observance of an order of precedence in serving (1970, pp.297-299). Taking the former case, Babb argues that caste differences are temporarily eclipsed during the sharing of prasād:

> ... the group mutes manifest differences within itself by reaching beyond the world of man, and mundane relationships among men, for a point of reference against which the group as a whole can be defined. Whatever the normal cleavages within the group, for a moment all are one in the sense that the aggregate is defined as a unity, becoming one pole in hierarchical opposition to divinity (ibid., p.298).

It is interesting that he goes on to describe a local version of Govardhan Pūjā in which members of Cowherd sub-castes play a leading part. Large quantities of milk are distributed and informants make much of the fact that even Untouchables are included in the festivities. Of the pūjā itself he writes:

> A large heap of cowdung is placed in an open field, and a herd of cattle is driven over it at full speed. The cowdung, having been touched by the feet (a relatively polluted part of the body) of bovine divinity, is now taken in handfulls by the men of the village and applied to each others' foreheads (relatively the purest part of the body). The reciprocal application of cowdung (at one level an expression of hierarchy between divinity and man) is explicitly regarded as an affirmation of amity between the participants and is invariably followed by an embrace (ibid., p.300).

Nevertheless, Babb's theory would be highly inappropriate as an explanation for Govardhan Pūjā and Annakūṭ as observed in the Vallabha havelīs. Although I would agree that the festival is regarded as 'an affirmation of amity between participants', I would not be prepared to endorse the theory that group identity is achieved in opposition to divinity and in terms of a hierarchical arrangement, such as one of bovine hooves and human foreheads. Instead, I would argue that in order to identify the conceptual principles that underlie this ritual, and indeed all havelī rituals which involve the distribution of consecrated food, it is necessary to look beyond the social

to a spiritual level and hence to a 'logic' in terms of which Annakūṭ and Govardhan Pūjā serve to confirm the belief that all devotees, and even God Himself, are ultimately one and the same. Hierarchical differences are transcended through the realisation of this ultimate truth: they are not merely rendered negligible in relation to the hierarchical distance between man and God. Anthropologists have dealt rather cursorily with the spiritual dimension of Hindu devotional rituals in their eagerness to show how what are vaguely described as 'equalitarian values' are compromised in actual practice. Socially, hierarchical and secular status differentials are often of undeniable significance in determining the dynamics of commensality, but they do not necessarily form a major part of the conceptual vocabulary of temple ritual, and it is the latter that must be understood if we are to explain the spiritual meaning of a ritual sequence that ultimately aims to transcend the social.

In the previous chapter I described the offering as a medium by which the devotee conveys his loving devotion to Lord Krishna. By accepting the offering, Krishna both acknowledges and enjoys the devotee's love. On retrieving the remains, the devotee consumes his own loving devotion that has been sanctified by virtue of its having been fulfilled and that has been spiritually augmented with Krishna's pleasure and grace (cf. Hayley, 1980, pp. 115f.). Finally, prasād has the effect of enlightening the soul as to the true nature of its divine identity. What then are the wider commensal implications of this process in a feast such as Annakūṭ?

First of all it should be stressed that Annakūṭ is essentially a community-based festival celebrated by and on behalf of the Vaiṣṇava collectivity. Ideally, and to a large extent in practice, all temple-goers and functionaries make contributions towards the feast in cash, goods or services, and all subsequently receive shares in the sacred remains.

The belief that items utilised in sevā are imbued with the personal qualities of those sevaks responsible for their dedication further implies

that the entire feast, having been financed, organised and prepared by numerous sevaks acting in a variety of capacities, becomes an accumulation of the loving devotion experienced by one and all. The fact that foods are not normally offered in their raw uncooked state but lovingly prepared and garnished allows for them to become thoroughly impregnated with pure loving devotion.

Hence, when devotees assemble to take darshan of the splendid meal laid before the deity, they contemplate their combined devotion made materially manifest. The large mound of boiled rice and the baskets piled high with choice foods are a palpable expression of love in abundance.[26] The bathing of Govardhan and its cowdung effigies in liberal quantities of milk is likewise to be interpreted as an expression of overflowing love. The mountainous feast betokens mountainous devotion while the mountain itself, as a svarūp of Krishna, gives emphatic testimony to the deity's benevolence in the dispensation of grace.

All devotees are entitled to shares of the mountain of food. Boiled rice (bhāt) is of special significance in commensal terms because it belongs to the sakharī category of cooked foods which means that it is easily defiled by sense contact and also easily imbued with the pure or impure emotions of those who regard it. In normal circumstances bhāt is carefully restricted in its circulation being a medium of intimacy: those who partake of bhāt also partake of one another's moral attributes. My informants stressed repeatedly that the distribution and widespread consumption of sakharī prasād, particularly boiled rice, was an important instance of the breaching of ritual rules at Annakūṭ. They also pointed out that Annakūṭ is the only festival during which devotees are allowed to observe the deity enjoying the offerings. At Nāthdwāra, the boundary that encircles the sakharī offerings is broken altogether by men and women of the Bhīl tribal group (Untouchables in the eyes of high-caste Hindus) who carry off large quantities of bhāt.[27] In Jatīpurā the rice mound is levelled and looted by Brajvāsī cowherds. I observed no such ritual trespass in the Ujjain havelīs.

The Annakūṭ feast is an embodiment of collective devotional sentiments. Hence, by receiving shares of the feast, devotees participate in the joy of one another's devotion made sacred with reference to Krishna, the focus and fount of all love. To love Krishna is to love one's fellow devotees. An informant once explained to me that Krishna relishes most of all those offerings that have been prepared with the intention that other Vaiṣṇavas will enjoy the leftovers. On a spiritual level, Annakūṭ involves the pooling and dissemination of bhāva with the deity as the essential receiver and redistributor, the repository of an overflowing store of emotions. Bhāva is eventually raised to the level of the ecstasy of rasa. Devotees taste of the highest bliss (ānanda) and hence come to realise their essential oneness so that with one accord they experience the thrill of union with Krishna.

The transcendence of worldly forms of differentiation among devotees and between devotees and Krishna is not merely to be explained as a 'muting' of hierarchy, nor strictly speaking is it to be regarded as a kind of spiritual equality. Equality defines a relationship between two or more (i.e. different) things or persons whereas Krishna and the divine souls are ultimately recognised as being identical. This monistic principle is acknowledged by devotees when they assert that all initiates of the Path of Grace are absolutely one and the same (eka hī).

The common identity of initiates is often defined in commensal terms. Some devotees voice the opinion that they should ideally avoid giving prasād to non-initiates because it is almost always wasted on those who are unable to appreciate its sacred properties. They also say that devotees should refrain from accepting cooked food from outsiders since to take such food may have the deleterious effect of clouding or tainting the pure divine sentiments shared by members of the Vaiṣṇava satsang.[28] In normal circumstances, however, a variety of factors serve to determine commensal relations among initiates and between initiates and outsiders, including hierarchical distinctions. Nevertheless, a consideration of the dynamics

of sectarian patterns of commensality must necessarily account for spiritual as well as socio-hierarchical factors.[29]

We should regard the festival of Annakūṭ as being wholly consistent with the sectarian concept of puṣṭi, or spiritual nourishment. On the one hand, the mountain of food bears witness to the profound devotion of those who nurture and care for the divine infant, whereas on the other hand, Mount Govardhan bears witness to the role of Lord Krishna as a nourisher of souls. Incidentally, on a more physical plane it is true to say that the Vallabha temples are chiefly sustained by food and feasting.

The Three Kings

Finally, I should mention the traditional tripartite relationship between the deity, the preceptor and the king and the tensions concerning their respective rights over the temple and its endowments.[30]

I explained earlier that medieval Indian rulers tended to make substantial gifts of lands and villages to principal deities within their jurisdiction while allowing them a considerable degree of autonomy within the state system, including the right to receive and to enjoy all revenue on lands endowed. The deities were, in effect, as 'little kings' presiding over 'little kingdoms', being largely independent of state authority.

In Puṣṭimārga, as elsewhere in India, the relationship between the deity and the sovereign has always been conceived in terms of certain mutual obligations and conventions. On the one hand, it was considered to be the bounden duty of the sovereign to protect the deity whenever the peace of its temple abode was threatened from without or disrupted by conflict from within. He was also expected to provide a significant proportion of the means for the deity's maintenance, usually in the form of land endowments. On the other hand, the king hoped that his pious actions would ensure his spiritual and material welfare and hence that of his kingdom. By making endowments the king entered the redistributive system of the temple as a devotee: he served the deity as the deity's devoted servant and not as the deity's lord and master.[31]

Because of the very nature of the divine image, it is necessary for a human agent or agents, such as members of a preceptorial succession or priestly lineage, to act on its behalf. In certain instances the agents themselves are also revered as gods by their disciples. In the past kings have granted certain judicial and revenue rights to the descendants of Vallabhācārya. A perusal of the relevant farmans issued by Akbar and Shah Jahan during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries reveals that land (i.e. the right to collect and enjoy the revenue therefrom) was entrusted to the Tilkāyat and his descendants tax free and in perpetuity specifically for the expenses of the shrine (Ṭhākurdvāra) and for the god (Govardhan Nāth).[32] Hence the personal expenses of the Tilkāyat and those of the deity appear to have been largely indistinguishable. In later years the Tilkāyats enjoyed extensive privileges with regard to endowed lands such that in matters of position and influence they were not noticeably dissimilar to tributary rulers.

The descendants of Vallabha are generally referred to and respectfully addressed by the regal title of Mahārāja. This is in no way to be considered extraordinary in a country where holy men are addressed as 'great kings' as a matter of course and where spiritual status is partly defined in accordance with the titles and trappings of royalty. Just as the earthly king is the lord of the land, so the sādhu is the ruler of his own body and mind. Hence the Vallabhi Mahārājas are also known as Gosvāmīs, 'Masters (Controllers) of the Senses'. Moreover, the Gosvāmīs belong to a royal dynasty established by a World Conqueror (Digvijayin), the spiritual equivalent of the ancient ideal of the Universal Emperor (Cakravartin), who ruled by righteousness. Vallabha was installed as a preceptor and given the title of Revered Great Lord (Mahāprabhujī) by means of a grand Kanakabhiṣekha ceremony normally performed at the coronation of kings. Tradition has it that the great earthly ruler, King Krishnadevarāya of Vijayanagar, personally performed the honours by humbly anointing the spiritual preceptor (see Chapter III, pp.107-108).

The descendants of Vallabha are the devotional servants of Lord Krishna,

they have no other master. I have already made it clear that their status as sevakas is of profound spiritual significance, for the Mahārājas, like the divine images which they serve, are regarded by many devotees as incarnations of Krishna. The Supreme Lord chose to manifest Himself in the form of divine images and a divine lineage of gurus so as to revel in the sheer joy of serving and being served by Himself. In this sense, the Mahārājas are identified with the Lord of the Universe, King of the Three Worlds

Hence, Mahārāja and sovereign are both kings, though they rule different domains, and they are also both servants of the same Lord who is the ruler of both domains. Nevertheless, there has not always been complete agreement between kings and preceptors as to the precise nature and extent of their respective domains. The spiritual Mahārāja and the secular Mahārāja maintain different views of the world and of their relative standing within the world and hence each tends to justify his authority and actions in terms which the other consistently fails or refuses to understand.[33]

During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Mughal Emperors at Delhi made no great efforts to break the time-hallowed arrangement between deity and king. Akbar and Shah Jahan granted revenue collecting rights to the descendants of Vallabha at Jatīpurā and Gokul and ordered that they be spared from interference and molestation by imperial officials so that they would remain contented with their condition and therefore feel disposed to pray for the prosperity of the kingdom. Sampradāyik tradition maintains that Akbar held Shrī Nāthjī and the Mahārājas in great reverence. Although the Vārtās do not claim that he was an initiate, they tend to portray him as a devoted admirer.[34] But any ties of mutual respect were torn asunder by Aurangzeb with the result that Shrī Nāthjī was quickly transported to Mewar where the rulers granted the deity extensive endowments and absolute protection. Thereafter, the Mahārānās of Udaipur renewed the endowments at the beginning of each reign.

Towards the last quarter of the last century, relations between the Mahārānā and the Tilkāyat became strained. In 1876, the Tilkāyat, Shrī

Giridhārījī, was severely reprimanded by the Mewar Darbar for disobeying its directives and was ordered to acknowledge his subordination to the Mahārānā, Sajjan Singh, who was a minor at the time. The Tilkāyat continued in his defiance supported by a large number of Vaiṣṇava followers. He even appealed to the British Government to intervene in the dispute and to take the deity and temple under its direct protection, but the latter refused to act on the grounds that it was an internal affair. Finally, the Darbar forcibly removed the Tilkāyat from office and banished him from Mewar with a pension of Rs. 1,000 per month.[35] His son Shrī Govardhanlāljī was appointed Tilkāyat in his place. By deposing the Tilkāyat and removing him from his position of control over the temple, the Mewar Darbar successfully demonstrated its power and right to intervene in what many sectaries regarded as an inviolable spiritual succession. As far as the Darbar was concerned it was necessary to act in order to prevent the Tilkāyat from extending his spiritual privileges over its own secular rights.

Another bone of contention arose in 1933 after the death of Shrī Govardhanlāljī and with the succession to the Tilkāyat-ship of his son, Shrī Dāmodarlāljī. Apparently, the latter's affair with a dancing girl convinced the Mahārānā and his Darbar that he was not deserving of his position as a spiritual leader and should therefore mend his ways forthwith or else be deprived of his right to succeed to the Gaddī. Once again a Tilkāyat showed his defiance with the result that the threat was duly carried out. His son, Shrī Govindlāljī, then a minor, was installed in his place and advised until coming of age in 1948. By a farman of 1934, the Mahārānā declared that:

1. The shrine of Shrī Nāthjī is a religious institution catering for followers of the Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya, that all property dedicated to the deity belongs to the shrine, that the Tilkāyat Mahārāja is merely a Custodian, Manager and Trustee of the said property, and that the Darbar has the absolute right to ensure that such property is legitimately used.
2. The law of Udaipur has always been that succession to the Gaddī of the Tilkāyat is regulated according to the principle of primogeniture,

and that the Darbar reserves the absolute right to depose a Tilkāyat if the latter is deemed unfit to carry out the duties of his office.

3. If the Tilkāyat is a minor, the Darbar has the absolute right to take measures for the proper management of the shrine and its properties during his minority.

4. The Mahārānā has declared that Shri Dāmodarlāljī is unfit to occupy the Gaddī and approves of the succession of his son Shrī Govindlāljī.[36]

The dispute has been a protracted one of great significance for the sect. Nowadays, the place of the Mahārānā has been taken by a new kind of sovereign, viz. the State Government of Rājasthān, which now maintains a special responsibility for the management of the properties and offerings dedicated to the shrine. It would appear that the Tilkāyat, along with many preceptors and their followers within the sect, greatly resented the restrictions placed on his authority. In 1957, he attempted to disband the Managing Committee of the shrine and removed some valuables but was waylaid by the authorities at Amber en route to Delhi. His actions caused widespread concern such that the Government was moved to appoint a Commission of Enquiry which published a report in 1959 severely censuring the Tilkāyat for his conduct. In the same year the Rājasthān Government passed the Nathdwara Temple Act with the intention of providing for the better administration of the shrine. One of its main provisions was the appointment of a Temple Board to manage the properties vested in the deity. The Tilkāyat contested the Act in court in 1962 and went to an appeal in 1963 which was dismissed. The legality of the Mahārānā's farman of 1934 was confirmed by the court on the grounds that it was issued by an absolute monarch whose order is law, and further that:

> ... it is of the very essence of sovereignty ... vested in him that he could supervise and control the administration of public charity (A.I.R., 1963: 1638).

Other Mahārājas have had recourse to the courts over the same issues that have concerned the Tilkāyat.[37] Generally, they have contended that:

1. Their temples are not public temples but their own private houses

(haveliīs), entry to which is gained after receiving the permission of the resident Mahārāja.

2. Their deities are not public deities but the private family deities (kul-devatās) of the Vallabha Dynasty and hence the worship of these deities is of a domestic nature (ghar-sevā). Visiting devotees are allowed to take darshan after receiving the permission of the appropriate Mahārāja.

3. Hence all endowments and properties, including the temples themselves, do not belong to the deity nor do they belong to the Vaiṣṇavas in general, but are the private and personal properties of the Mahārājas. Devotees make offerings after receiving the Mahārājas' permission. Hence, Mahārājas have claimed full proprietary rights to their temples, their deities, and all temple endowments.

Nevertheless, such claims have been thwarted in the courts where it has been decided on several occasions that the temples are indeed public charitable properties, along with temple deities and all movable and immovable properties. The Mahārājas have no right to alienate such properties, nor have they the right to remove the deities or other valuables from the temples. Far from having the proprietary rights of a Mahant or Shebait, they are no more than Custodians, Managers and Trustees.[38]

The matter is of relevance to all temples that are part of the 'estates' of Mahārājas. The Baiṭhak at Ujjain is now managed by the Nāthdwāra Temple Board. Temples B, C and D are affiliated to sublineages of the First and Second Gaddīs whose spiritual leaders reside in Jatīpurā and Indore, one of whom has been involved in extensive litigation with regard to temples at Koṭa and Jatīpurā concerning the very issues outlined above. Although the Mahārājas are often referred to as māliks in the sense of landlords (proprietary owners) by their followers in Ujjain, many devotees are well aware of the restrictions placed on their secular rights by law. But it is not possible to make straightforward statements as to where devotees' support and sympathies lie. Whereas many deplore the interference of law and politics in sectarian affairs, they also admit that they would not be prepared to allow their gurus to sell temple properties or to remove temple deities. Elsewhere, devotees

have resorted to the courts in order to prevent their gurus from doing precisely these things, while still insisting upon their profound reverence for their gurus as spiritual leaders.[39]

Perhaps it is that in the Mahārājas' eyes the Sovereign State has unjustly abandoned the time-hallowed obligations of the medieval king as a protector and benefactor of religious institutions, and, above all, as one who granted a considerable degree of autonomy to the beneficiaries of charitable endowments. Perhaps the Mahārājas are of the opinion that the present State has unfairly extended its secular powers into the spiritual realm and in doing so has severely curtailed their traditional rights. Perhaps they resent politicians and civil servants for being excessively interfering, while casting auditors and taxmen in the role of the instruments of Government oppression. If this is the case, then they stand firmly by the medieval and idealistic Sampradāyik world view and find the State in default of its traditional obligations. The State, on the other hand, as a democratic body, endeavours to secure the proper management of religious institutions on behalf of the public. The two sides are at cross purposes; the boundaries of the secular and the spiritual are differently defined; both Mahārājas and politicians are right within the terms of reference which they choose to uphold.

In view of the material splendour of temple worship characteristic of the Vallabha Sect, it is hardly surprising that rights over the redistributive system are of the utmost significance to all concerned. In the past the Mahārājas have been extremely wealthy and powerful landlords; one can therefore understand their resentment of Government interference, for they have much to lose. It is said that the earliest <u>havelīs</u> were built in the form of private dwellings in order to avoid the attention of iconoclastic Muslim rulers: nowadays the descendants of Vallabhācārya emphasise that the <u>havelīs</u> are private dwellings in order to prevent their desecration by agents of the secular State.

Notes to Chapter VIII

1. Massive endowments given by merchants and princes either anonymously or else in a remarkable spirit of humility form a significant theme in the shrine's folk history. Tod mentions one such instance which was supposed to have occurred on the occasion of Annakūṭ some eighty years before his visit to Nāthdwāra:

> Rana Ursi presented to the god a tora, or massive golden anklet-chain set with emeralds: Beejy Sing a diamond necklace worth twenty-five thousand rupees: the other princes according to their means. They were followed by an old woman of Surat, with infirm step and shaking head, who deposited four coppers in the hand of the high-priest, which were received with a gracious smile, not vouchsafed to the lords of the earth. "The Rānd is in luck," whispered the chief of Kishengurh to the Rana. Soon afterwards the statue of Heri was brought forth, when the same old woman placed at its feet a bill of exchange for seventy thousand rupees. The mighty were humbled, and the smile of the Gosaen was explained. Such gifts, and to a yet greater amount, are, or were, by no means uncommon from the sons of commerce, who are only known to belong to the flock from the distinguishing necklace of the sect. (Tod, 1914, Vol. I, p.436)

2. I should stress the symbolic as well as the functional significance of the bhaṇḍār, meaning 'storehouse' or 'treasury', as the physical/spiritual container replete with the 'dearest' substances/feelings which devotees are able to offer to their beloved deity. The precious querns and the wells of ghee are to be regarded likewise. (cf. Chapter V, pp. 183-184).

3. By 'ritual status' I do not mean 'caste status' but rather status determined according to a ritual order of privilege and precedence relating specifically to the spiritual domain of the temple and not to the wider social context (but see below, pp. 284-285).

4. Fixed shares of this kind are known as neg, a word that is used in the literature of the Sampradāya to denote an 'hereditary privilege' held by 'hereditary servants' (negī) of the deity which consists of the right to receive shares of the deity's food remains (Vaudeville, 1980: 43).

5. The temple authorities have also granted the Potters the right to extract clay from two bighas of land nearby (Jindel, 1976:129).

6. See Jhaveri (1928, farman IV) for a full translation of this and other farmans issued in the interests of Viṭṭhalnāth and his

descendants. Earlier, in 1577 AD, the emperor Akbar had made a grant of the town of Gokul to Viṭṭhalnāth and four year later issued another farman which proclaimed that the cows of Viṭṭhalnāth should be allowed to graze without obstruction in the vicinity of Gokul (Jhaveri, farmans I and II).

7. See A.I.R. 1963 Supreme Court (from Rajasthan), Shri Govindlalji v. State of Rajasthan (pp. 1648-1649).

8. See Bagchi (1933) for a treatise on the juristic personality of Hindu deities.

9. Those ritual acts which involve the touching of the image constitute the most intimate form of devotional worship (niji-sevā) and hence are reserved for the mukhiyā and his immediate assistants. Next to touching the image, it is considered a privilege to enter the inner-sanctum; normally bhītariyās do so only after receiving the mukhiyā's permission.

10. In Ujjain the cash remuneration of mukhiyās varies between Rs. 60 and 100 per month.

11. All food consumed by priests should consist of temple prasād. In other words, priests should completely refrain from taking food and drink 'outside'.

12. A single manager is often referred to by the title adhikārī (one having the 'right' or 'privilege' to act as a manager), the first incumbent having been Kṛṣṇadās, the kīrtanyā and manager of the original Shrī Govardhannāth temple (see Barz, 1976:207, footnote 2). The English words 'manager' and 'managing committee' are also in common usage.

13. Bheṇṭa, 'offering', also means a 'meeting'. Sanmukha means 'face-to-face'. Hence sanmukha-bheṇṭa is particularly appropriate for this kind of donation because it is made during the darshan in the immediate presence of the deity.

14. At major pilgrimage centres the cash amounts required for manorathas are much higher than in Ujjain. A list posted on a notice-board in a major temple at Mathurā included the following sums:

Maṅgal Bhog	-	Rs. 51
Palnā	-	Rs. 101
Rājbhog	-	Rs. 501
Utthāpan Bhog	-	Rs. 31
Ārati	-	Rs. 25
Shayan Bhog	-	Rs. 201
Annakūṭ	-	Rs. 15,000

15. Barz (1976: 22, footnote 2) mentions that the Shrī Nāthjī svarūp was thought to have three distinguishable sections: Nāgadaman (Subduer of the Serpent) being the left section including the upraised arm; Devadaman (Subduer of the Gods) being the middle section; and Indradaman (Subduer of Indra) being the right section (cf. Chapter V, footnote 6). According to another sectarian tradition the three sections also exist in three separate svarūpas: Devadaman, the Shrī Nāthjī image at Nāthdwāra; Nāgadaman in a temple at Baroda in Gujarāt; and Indradaman at Shrī Govardhan Nāthjī kī Havelī (Temple E) in Ujjain.

16. The bhaṭṭhī or cūlhā is a hearth made of brick or clay, roughly pear-shaped in plan and about three feet in length. Cooking pots are placed over the circular end and fuel of wood or dried cowdung fed from the narrower end. Each havelī has several bhaṭṭhīs, at least one in each kitchen with extra ones kept by for preparing the extra food required at large festivals.

17. Bhaṭṭhī-pūjā is performed on several occasions: when a new stove is installed in a domestic kitchen, when an old one is repaired, and when there is a marriage in the family. Owners of teastalls and sweetshops regularly perform pūjā of the stove that earns them a living, particularly on Saturdays and on the eleventh day of every fortnight (Ekādashī).

18. During my period of fieldwork in 1977, Annakūṭ was celebrated on two occasions: first as a climax to the sacred leap-month (Adhīk Mās) that occurs every third year in the Hindu calendar (see Chapter VI, p.198), and the second as per usual in the month of Kārttik. For this reason I was able to witness the first Annakūṭ in the Ujjain havelīs (in August) and the second at Jatīpurā (in November), the latter marking the site of the original 'historic' event.

19. In Temple C the rite is performed in the courtyard adjacent to the nijmandir; but in many havelīs (including Temple B) it is held in a separate courtyard known appropriately as Govardhan Cauk (see plan on p. 160).

20. Govardhan Parvat is actually a low elongated ridge running approximately north-south or more precisely between the village of Pūñcharī or Puchrī (lit., 'tail') to the south-west and Rādhā Kuṇḍ to the north-east. The ridge is broken somewhat near Jatīpurā, a village on the western side which according to the Vallabhas is situated at the 'mouth' of the hill.

21. Hence Lord Krishna as Cowherd takes darshan of Himself as Mount Girirāj,

an act which is quite consistent with Puranic accounts in which Krishna assumes the form of the Mountain to accept the offerings of the Brajvāsīs while yet remaining in the company of his cowherd companions (see Vaudeville, 1980, pp. 4-5).

22. Ideally, there should be fifty-six varieties of offering (chappan bhog).

23. The most zealous pilgrims advance by measuring their own length repeatedly in a succession of full prostrations.

24. It is significant that cows, traditionally regarded as the principal source of Indra's wealth, were formerly dedicated to Indra and Govardhan as blood offerings. Yet such blood offerings are not mentioned in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, probably because, as Vaudeville suggests, 'it must have hurt the sensibilities of mediaeval Vaiṣṇavas' (1980:5).

25. The anthropological literature includes several descriptions of congregational devotional groups organised for the purpose of the singing of devotional songs (bhajanas). Writers have stressed the egalitarian ethos expressed by members of such groups and its practical limitations in face of the realities of intra-group interaction and social composition. See, in particular, Carstairs (n.d., pp.59-292); Singer (1959, pp.141-182; 1966, pp.90-138; 1972); Babb (1970, pp.291-292); and Pocock (1973, pp.102-107).

26. The quantity of boiled rice prepared for Annakūṭ varies from temple to temple, though no temples can match Nāthdwāra where the heap consists of some 125 maunds (Nāthdwāra Temple Board, 1966:73; Jindel, 1976:72), which, according to my calculations, approximates to more than $4\frac{1}{2}$ tons!

27. The 'looting' of the mound of rice is the birthright of the Bhīls originally granted to them by Rānā Rāja Singh after they had helped him to defend the shrine against the Mughals (Jindel, 1976:73).

28. For the same reason, accomplished devotees should avoid engaging in all forms of social intercourse with non-devotees so that alaukika sectarian truths will remain concealed from the laukika world, and hence uncontaminated. The Vārtas are explicit on such matters; as the CVV explains:

> Just as the best foods are carefully guarded so that they may continue to be suitable as food offerings to Shrī Ṭhākurajī, just so it is essential to protect the Vaiṣṇava ḍharma (Vārtā of Krsnadāsa, trans. Barz, 1976:215).

29. This subject deserves more attention than can be given here. In passing, I should mention sevaks known within the sect as Maryādī-Vaiṣṇavas or Marjādī-Vaiṣṇavas. These sevaks prepare food with their own hands and refuse prasād from all other initiates excepting temple priests in aparas. At temple feasts they generally sit alone or with other Maryādīs. In Ujjain, there are no more than a handful of such initiates. Opinions concerning their status are ambiguous: either they are deeply respected for their austere lifetyles, or they are criticised for being too ostentatious and punctilious in their habits in a manner befitting the non-sectarian Maryādā-mārga. What is important is that the enhanced spiritual state which Maryādīs attempt to maintain is qualitatively different from that associated with caste. As one informant put it:

> Sevaks have caste habits in their minds but they try to behave the way of Puṣṭimārga. When A and B refuse to take prasād from other sevaks they are not acting according to the rules of caste, they are acting as Marjādī-Vaiṣṇavas.

30. A full analysis of this complex theme would require a detailed study of the appropriate historical texts (legal and scriptural) which lies outside the scope of this thesis. I simply wish to point out some of the main issues concerning the relationships between king, deity and preceptor which affect the redistributive structure of the temple.

31. The same point has been made by Appadurai and Breckenridge with reference to South Indian temples. The authors suggest that the royal mandate to protect the temple is a delicate one:

> ... for the king cannot rule the temple. He is himself a servant (cevārti) of the deity, and indeed the human agent of divine sovereignty enshrined in the deity (1976:206).

It is in this relationship between temple deities and human kings that the authors see 'an elegant and symbiotic division of sovereignty'. By serving the temple deity the king shared in the deity's royalty:

> By being the greatest servant of the sovereign deity, the king sustains and displays his rule over men (ibid., p.207).

32. See, for example, Imperial Farmans V, VI, and VII, in Jhaveri (1928).

33. Richard Burghart has made an interesting study of the relationship between the three 'kings' - deity, zamindar, and ascetic - with reference to the dwellings of ascetics (kutis) in the Rāmānandī Sect at Janakpur (1978b). Also relevant here is Burghart's theoretical paper on the differing hierarchical models of the Hindu social system as held by rulers, ascetics and Brahmans (1978a).

34. The Vārta literature effectively puts kings in their rightful place within a Puṣṭimārgi universe. I have already mentioned Rājā Āshakaran, the devout disciple of Viṭṭhalnāthjī, who considered himself to be one of the lowliest servants (dāsa) of Lord Krishna (DBVV, pp. 139-156). The disciples of Vallabha and Viṭṭhalnāth felt such intense love and loyalty for their gurus and for Krishna that they remained wholly indifferent to the power and majesty of worldly kings. The account of the life of Sūrdās records that the great devotional poet was once presented to the Mughal Emperor Akbar while the latter was travelling from Delhi to Agra. At Akbar's bidding, Sūrdās sang a pada describing the Lord's alaukika love and grace; but when he was asked to sing of the Emperor's own royal glory, he responded with a pada in praise of Lord Krishna. Akbar, so it seems, fully understood Sūrdās's devotion:

> When Akbar had heard the pada, he thought to himself, "Would Sūradāsajī sing of my fame? If he were at all greedy, then he would have sung of my majesty. But, since he is a man who belongs to Parameshvara he will sing only of the fame of Parameshvara" (From The Vārtā of Sūradāsa, trans. by Barz, 1976:121).

Thus the Vārtā contrives it so that the tolerant Akbar fully endorses the sectarian ideal of sovereignty and of the place of the earthly king in relation to the deity and its loyal devotees.

35. This dispute is summarised by Jindel (1976, pp.197-199).

36. For details of this particular farman see A.I.R. 1963 Supreme Court, pp.1649-1650.

37. See, for instance, A.I.R. 1953 Bombay 153 (Vol. 40, C.N.48); see also the Court of the District Judge, Mathurā, original suit number 1 of 1955, Sri Manohar Chaube and Sri Gopal Gopal vs. His Holiness Goswami Ranchorlalji.

38. As a Custodian the Mahārāja has a right to custody of the temple properties, as a Manager he has the right to manage the properties, and as a Trustee he has the right to administer the properties on behalf of the beneficiary, all subject to the overall supervision of the State. These statuses do not constitute a legal right to property. According to the courts, the Mahārāja's position is not the same as that of a Mahant of a monastic institution or a Shebait of a temple, both of which include proprietary rights. Consider, for example, the following legal definition:

> Thus in the conception of Mahantship, as in Shebaitship, both the elements of office and property, of duties and

> personal interest are blended together, and neither can be detached from the other. The personal or beneficial interest of the Mahant in the endowments attached to an institution is manifested in his large powers of disposal and administration and his right to create derivative tenures in respect to endowed properties; and these and other rights of a similar character invest the office of the Mahant with the character of a proprietary right which, though anomalous to some extent, is still a genuine legal right (A.I.R., 1954, SC 282).

39. See footnote 37 above for examples of two such court cases.

CHAPTER IX

DOMESTIC TROUBLES: MOTIVE AND MISCONDUCT

Perhaps it is inevitable that a redistributive system based on such lofty principles is not a perfect one, or rather is not perfect in the eyes of its participants, in which case it is not so much the system that is at fault but the people who maintain it. A man is not an honest Vaiṣnava just because he wears a bright vermilion tilak on his brow, nor is he a true sevak just because he goes through the motions of doing sevā. It is common knowledge that some persons perpetrate all kinds of mischief in the name of sevā.

The conduct and motives of other devotees are constantly open to question. Allegations of misconduct or of the harbouring of ulterior motives are rarely made in direct face-to-face situations; instead the gossip lines are kept buzzing. Those devotees who are particularly active in temple life are always ready to justify their behaviour and to avow their honest intentions in the near certain knowledge that they are thereby defending their reputations against unheard but nevertheless ever-present whisperings within the temple precincts. Generally speaking, it appears that the more prominent the position of the devotee in the redistributive system, the more likely he or she will be a target for gossip on a theme of misappropriation; excepting of course a certain notorious butter thief whose conduct is beyond reproach in all but an alaukika sense.

I now focus on the avowal of motives and the imputation of motives and misconduct in the redistributive context of some Vallabha temples. The subject is of importance because it will lead us to an examination of the connections between Puṣṭimārga and the interests, both real and supposed, of the urban business castes. This is itself part of a general though little

studied theme of the relationship between commerce and sectarianism in the Indian setting.[1] Although anthropologists have begun to study the values and behaviour of Indian merchants in the context of family businesses (see Lamb, 1959 and Fox, 1973), they have not as yet seriously considered the involvement of businessmen in specifically religious organisations, and this despite the well-known devoutness of the Bania and the fact that a large proportion of Banias in western India are either Jain or Vaiṣṇava sectaries. How, then, do business values and interests relate to those of Vaiṣṇava bhakti in general and of Puṣṭimārga in particular?

Businessman and Devotee

Some eighty per cent of Puṣṭimārgis in Ujjain are Banias, which means that they belong to one of a number of business castes. This is fairly typical of the social composition of the sect in many of the towns and cities of western and central India. I suggested in Chapter II that the relationship between the Banias and Puṣṭimārga has been largely a symbiotic one.[2] On the one hand, Puṣṭimārgi theology fully sanctions the pursuit of wealth through business - normally regarded by non-Banias as an inferior or even odious occupation (Fox, 1973:57) - by elevating it to the status of a sacred activity, providing that the businessman renounces all personal attachments to his worldly belongings and actions by making them over to Lord Krishna and by promising to dedicate all actions and acquisitions to Lord Krishna in future. In effect, the businessman renounces all yet gives up nothing. 'Interest' is thereby converted into disinterest. The mundane and utilitarian pursuit of profit (artha) is consecrated through an act of dedication and becomes an expression of selfless service of the divine (sevā). On the other hand, Puṣṭimārgi temples have proliferated as merchants have given palpable expression to their dedication by endowing money and property in those places where they have settled during their migrations in pursuit of trade.

The fact that temple worship in Puṣṭimārga is conspicuously lavish and costly would seem to offer an excellent opportunity for prosperous

businessmen to earn the respect of their fellow initiates and to convert their wealth into ritual status by making generous offerings. In a negative sense wealthy devotees are expected to sponsor manorathas. Those who do not do so are more likely to be gossiped about for being miserly. Moreover, by becoming redistributors, they may enhance their reputations as generous providers, particularly by sponsoring feasts. Magnificent manorathas mean munificent manorathīs. To a large extent the impressive sevā in Vallabha temples has been sustained by its own magnificence since it has provided wealthy businessmen with an opportunity to display their piety through acts of remarkable generosity. Pocock makes a similar point:

> More than any other sect in Gujarat, the Pushti Marga provided an arena in which the wealthy merchant classes could display their wealth and earn at once distinction and merit (1973:117).

But we should be careful not to lay exclusive emphasis on this familiar model of the conversion of wealth into ritual status. Many devotees complain that wealthy businessmen are particularly tight-fisted when it comes to making donations to temple deities, while those few who do are often alleged to be pursuing selfish ends. Indeed, it is possible to detect an element of calculative self-restraint on the part of many businessmen when making offerings as if they do not wish to appear too mean, but nor do they wish to appear over-generous. We shall see that the reasons for such restraint are somewhat complex. What should be stressed at this stage is that the redistributive system as presented in the previous chapter - one based on altruistic principles of magnanimous pooling and sharing - has a less than ideal underside. We shall stay with a participants' model, but one which corresponds to participants' views of how the system really works rather than how they think it is supposed to work.

The conversion of utilitarian business interest (artha) into an expression of selfless spiritual interest (sevā) is a neat theological device. But devotees are not easily convinced. Much gossip centres on the assumption that what is outwardly intended as a form of selfless action is usually a

veneer for the pursuit of self-interest. The traits normally associated with the Bania castes as a whole only serve to reinforce this assumption.

Briefly, the term Bania designates a general status category which encompasses an aggregate of castes traditionally associated with the Vaishya varṇa, being the third of the four 'estates' of Brahman, Kṣatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Banias engage in many forms of business including long-distance trade, banking, money-lending, broking and retailing. They tend to regard themselves as superior to artisans because they do not make with their own hands those items which they buy and sell. The word 'Bania' is normally avoided by members of the so-called 'Bania' castes; they prefer the designation 'Mahājan'. 'Mahājan' is a polite term denoting an honourable and courteous merchant: 'Bania' has rather base connotations.

It is often said that Banias are so absorbed in the making of money that they have little or no time and energy for any other interest which does not hold promise of a satisfactory material reward.[3] They also have a reputation for being notoriously stingy (kañjūs). For every story which tells of a rich Bania who gave lakhs of rupees to a temple, there is another which tells of a Bania who lived like a pauper, never giving a single pice to Ṭhākurjī, and yet who died leaving a hoard of gold buried under the floor. Banias are also credited with, and stoutly admit to, a remarkable business acumen. But their facility in balancing accounts is allegedly matched by their ability to fiddle, cheat and swindle without the slightest compunction.

Banias are known to be very particular about what they eat and with whom they eat. They are strict vegetarians and also abstain from alcohol, onions, garlic, and too much red chilli. All these substances are thought to create heat in the body leading to quick loss of temper and aggressive behaviour, conduct which in the estimation of Bania informants could only be detrimental to business and hence harmful to the businessman who must keep a polite smile for the customer and who may be called upon at any moment to pacify an irate customer (see Chapter VII, pp. 227-228).

As Fox points out in his study of Tezibazar, merchant communities in many areas of the world are separated from the wider society by social, ethnic and religious differences. The introduction of economic rationality in pre-market economies based primarily on kinship is regarded with repugnance by the traditional majority with the result that the merchant minority is forced to accept a degree of social ostracism which it copes with by developing traits which are at once protective and profit maximising (Fox, 1969:58). We have already mentioned that two such traits generally associated with the Bania castes are meanness and passivity. Fox also notes two further traits which are as pertinent to the Vaiṣṇava Banias in Ujjain as they are to the Banias of Tezibazar. They are, first, the 'cultivation of an anonymous personal, family and caste image', and second, 'the containment of much of life within the compartment of the joint family and the avoidance of larger social and ritual entanglements' (ibid., pp.58-59). In particular, entanglements such as friendship and feasting are avoided because they lead to social involvement beyond the joint family which limits the range of potential exploitation by business means and puts one under obligation to a host and hence in a position of inferiority until one is able to reciprocate. Hence 'interaction with food is almost entirely limited to the normal round of ceremonial occasions such as marriage, birth and death' (ibid., p.59).

This is not the place for a detailed study of Bania stereotypes, nor for a study of Bania businesses. I shall therefore restrict myself to a few relevant comments.

Bania businesses tend to be almost exclusively family concerns. All family members pool their labour and resources for the benefit of the entire family and in a spirit of mutual loyalty and trust. The making of important decisions on family-cum-business matters is relatively easy since serious dissension is an infrequent occurrence, especially when all members share the same interests and aspirations. Any quarrels that do arise are normally

contained within the family. Overall, business families tend to be socially introverted, members refrain from establishing close personal ties outside of the family circle. Conversely, Banias are not known for their hospitality, while anyone who shows a more than usual interest in family affairs is regarded with particular suspicion.[4]

There are reasons why Banias should try to preserve a degree of anonymity. As Fox notes, self-effacement tends to discourage amity and enmity, both of which are not good for business: 'The less overt the personality, the less there is to like or dislike' (1969:60). By keeping a low profile and by concealing wealth, merchants protect themselves against rivals who would try to discredit them and members of the public at large who tend to view their profit-making activities with much repugnance.

Returning to the Vallabha temple we have seen that it is a kind of business concern that has pronounced domestic associations. Traditionally, it is conceived as the house of Nand Bābā and the private house of the Mahārāja. The deity is sometimes described as a family deity (kul-devatā) and the worship as domestic worship (ghar-sevā). Devotees establish various intimate relationships with the deity, as parents, friends and lovers. Further, the principles that articulate interpersonal relations among co-devotees, i.e. those of high-souled altruism, helping and sharing, are much the same as those that should bind close kin and friends. But whereas the family business is a socio-economic reality, the temple as a domestic concern is merely a mental construct.

For most businessmen, the socio-religious commitments and obligations required of the temple-going devotee are to some extent at odds with a commercial rationale that calls for the avoidance of personal entanglements outside of the family. Indeed, the ideal of the Vaiṣṇava community as a close-knit association of devotees bound by ties of friendship, commensality, mutual aid, trust and hospitality, could not be more at variance with business strategy. In its own special way, Puṣṭimārga sanctifies the pursuit of

profit, and yet indirectly it requires that profit-seekers lay aside certain fundamental commercial axioms normally deemed to be indispensable for successful business practice.

Consequently, the prosperous retailer or wholesaler must consider very seriously the extent of his involvement in temple affairs. What incentives are there to encourage him to make a substantial and regular investment in a concern that requires him to relinquish control over his investment and to place it in the hands of fellow devotees who he would normally regard with suspicion? Further, if he should enter into close personal relationships with other devotees, might not this create social obligations which could be detrimental to business if carried out of the temple and into the market place? Certain precautions can be taken to obviate such a tendency, one being to restrict the degree of one's involvement in temple affairs by making one's visits to the temple very brief or infrequent. Another is to suppress or to avoid acknowledging the tie of fellow initiate outside of the temple context.[5]

Nevertheless, many Bania men and women do visit the temples regularly and some relatively wealthy merchants play leading roles in temple affairs. It is within the temple context that the Bania values of passivity and anonymity, together with the stereotype of the miserly, calculating and self-seeking merchant, assume an interesting significance.

The Misappropriation of Sāmagrī

Devotees use the English word 'corruption' when referring in a general way to a variety of morally reprehensible practices that are alleged to occur in the havelīs. But informants are usually more specific in describing mischievous deeds and in identifying mischief makers. Alleged misdeeds most commonly involve the misappropriation of temple property (money, ornaments, sāmagrī, bhog and prasād) by embezzlement and theft.[6] Others involve favouritism and bribery.

It has been suggested that despite the fact that bribery and corruption

are prominent features in many developing countries, anthropologists have tended to ignore the phenomena in their analyses. Caplan suggests that two reasons for this are, first, the difficulty of establishing definite evidence of such behaviour, and second, the reluctance on the part of anthropologists to publish facts that could embarrass friends and informants (1971:266). As far as the first reason is concerned, we should stress that corruption is an alleged practice as well as an actual practice and can therefore be examined in its former sense in the same way that anthropologists have analysed witchcraft. The fact that anthropologists have been unable to establish substantial evidence of the actual incidence of witchcraft has not deterred them from making very valuable studies of witchcraft allegations. Caplan does himself point out this parallel (ibid.,p.267). The second reason why anthropologists have neglected the study of corruption, that of embarrassing friends and informants, is a more sensitive one and calls for a degree of discretion in the reporting of ethnographic data. Hence, instead of focusing on specific issues of this kind, I present three brief and generalised extracts which will serve to illustrate the sorts of misconduct that are commonly evoked in gossip.[7]

1. A priest confided in a devotee who told me that the munīm is surreptitiously pocketing some of the ingredients intended for Ṭhākurjī's bhog and taking more prasād than he ought as remuneration for his services. The priest also said that the munīm is in league with three of the managers who all want him relieved of his priestly duties; that a few days ago he (the priest) had prepared special cakes for Ṭhākurjī worth Rs. 15 apiece but the managers had taken them to their homes without leaving donations. But the devotee told me that the priest is also keeping more prasād than he ought and secretly selling it in the bazar; that the managers are all rascals anyhow, save for one who is very honest in his official dealings and who always ensures that he (my informant) receives a portion of prasād at festivals.

2. After the last darshan of the evening, the priest emerged from his sevā and invited myself and a companion (a devotee-businessman) to join him in the temple garden. There he told us that the managers are not running the temple properly because they are always squabbling amongst themselves and because they are only concerned with practical things such as making money; that they could not even agree on whom to appoint as a munīm so they appointed two instead, one of whom is not to be trusted which is very worrying for the priest because if anything should come amiss then he might get the blame; that if managers wanted to take advantage of their positions they could easily do so; for example, say that the gross temple income is Rs. 5,000 per month and the managers only spend Rs. 2,500 per month, then what happens to the remaining money? They could still write in the account books that they have spent the entire Rs. 5,000. Besides, the managers keep Ṭhākurjī's cash donations and his expensive ornaments in their own homes. It is possible that some of them invest the money in their own businesses keeping the interest for themselves and returning the principal; and the contents of the donation box (golak) should not be counted in the treasurer's house but in the temple where all the Vaiṣṇavas can see exactly how much has been deposited. Not long ago a man gave a donation of Rs. 500 for a silver ornament for Ṭhākurjī and a certain manager bought a cheap second-hand ornament in the bazar and polished it so that he could pass it off as new; what happened to the rest of the money? Things are no better in Shrī/Temple where the priest gets Rs. 500 per month and sells much prasād in the bazar. It's all buying and selling there ... just like a sweetshop. The priest added that he had had many offers of priestly work elsewhere where he could get more than the meagre Rs. 75 he gets at the moment which would help him to pay off all the Bania shopkeepers who had loaned him money for his daughter's marriage; but he didn't intend to leave because the Vaiṣṇavas wanted him to stay. Before departing he gave us some prasād.

3. I gave Rs. 1.25 donation to a temple manager adding that I did not wish

to take prasād. The manager ordered the munīm to enter the amount in the receipt book and insisted that I take prasād saying, 'No matter how much a Vaiṣṇava gives as a donation, he should always receive prasād in return. If you don't wish to take all of it, then take just a pinch and give the rest to other Vaiṣṇavas.' Later the munīm brought prasād of laḍḍū in a leaf cup and gave me the receipt. The manager inspected the laḍḍū and exclaimed aloud 'The laḍḍūs are looking very small these days!' Then he quietly explained that 60 laḍḍūs should be prepared from one seer of ghee and three kilogrammes of sugar, but after inspecting a few laḍḍūs he could tell that the cook must be making 70 laḍḍūs from the same amount of ingredients and keeping 10 back for himself. (Why doesn't he censure the cook?) Because he doesn't wish to cause an argument; instead he intends to call a meeting of the Managing Committee and explain to the other managers that the laḍḍūs are very small without directly apportioning blame. (But why should the cook keep 10 laḍḍūs for himself?) Because he sells them to make extra money. He always says that he is poor but he must be getting Rs. 90-100 per month and he never has to pay rent, and people give him money when he delivers prasād to their homes. When he said some time back that he was leaving here for a better position elsewhere, why didn't he go? Because he is well off here and should be satisfied.

How, then, are we to explain such allegations of misconduct and why is it that managers and priests tend to be major targets (and mongers) of malicious gossip?

Sevaks: True and False

I explained in the previous chapter that temple managers are relatively prosperous men involved in their own family businesses. Some are called 'setha', being a term of respect for a distinguished and successful merchant. The office of temple manager is considered to carry much responsibility for the incumbent is expected to make important decisions on temple administration as well as on matters of income and expenditure. The position is also

regarded as something of an honour because it shows that the Mahārāja has put his trust in a devotee by inviting him to take office. Managers are themselves quick to point out the background to their appointment by a Mahārāja. They also stress that they receive no reward for their efforts as managers save the opportunity to serve Ṭhākurjī and the other Vaiṣṇavas which is reward enough. They say that being a manager is a thankless job and in one sense they are quite right.

It is a widespread assumption that managers take office to further their own business interests and to ingratiate themselves with the Mahārāja, all at the expense of Ṭhākurjī and the Vaiṣṇavas. As if countering such accusations, managers often insist that they originally accepted office with much reluctance, but did so in the end because others had urged them to on account of the good work they had done for Puṣṭimārga, because they could be trusted (to keep an eye on other managers), and most of all because the Mahārāja had recognised their honesty and hence their suitability for the position. How can one ignore the wishes of one's guru?

It is also a general assumption that real Vaiṣṇavas have no great interest in becoming managers; as one devotee put it, 'True sevaks just come to the temple for darshan and then they go home.' One prominent businessman-devotee was regarded with a degree of admiration because he had been asked to offer his services as a manager on several occasions but had steadfastly refused them. The same person explained to me that the Mahārāja had understood his decision, 'Because he knows that I can best serve in a quiet way and in an advisory capacity.' Another Vaiṣṇava told me that his wife's father was a manager but that he rarely went to the temple 'to mix with the other rogues', instead he preferred to practise sevā at home. In the opinion of my informant this manager had all of the qualities of a good Vaiṣṇava:

> A real (pakkā) Vaiṣṇava is a man who does sevā without showing others that he is doing so. He is a real Vaiṣṇava because he has prembhāva for Ṭhākurjī. If

> something is needed in the temple, he gives quietly and expects nothing in return. If Vaiṣṇavas are in difficulties, he helps them in all ways. When the Mahārāja comes to Ujjain, he goes to meet him out of love and he does whatever Mahārāja Shrī wants him to do. Mahārāja Shrī gives him his blessing. Some members of the Managing Committee do not do sevā; they have selfish motives. Whenever they come to take darshan of Mahārāja Shrī, they come to take something for themselves. They want to show outwardly that they are good Vaiṣṇavas. Some persons want to become managers for selfish reasons.

The concept of sevā and its implications are of considerable importance in the context of vocabularies of motive avowal and imputation. In Chapter IV I explained that sevā or 'devotional service' does not simply imply particular acts and procedures of worship but also an attitude of selfless devotion which is internal to the performer and not necessarily apparent to others. In this respect mental-sevā (mānasik-sevā) is considered to be the highest form of devotion because it is completely invisible such that those who perform it do so in complete secrecy. But the person who does 'good works' merely to earn the respect of other Vaiṣṇavas is not a real sevak. I also mentioned Mayer's study of sevā in the political context (Mayer, 1981). Politicians present themselves as sevaks serving the public selflessly even though the public never regards its politicians as such precisely because those who enter public life are thought to do so for the furtherance of their own careers and other such selfish interests.

Devotees referred to real, sincere, disinterested sevā as vāstavik-sevā. Those who do vāstavik-sevā are generally considered to be few in number and seldom known to others:

> Nowadays you should take the word sevā out of the dictionary. There is no sevā. You should not use this word in Puṣṭimārga because no-one is doing sevā. Those who are doing sevā are unknown, they are not coming forward. We do not do sevā, we do mazdūr (labour) to fill our stomachs.

Nevertheless, there are significant exceptions. Some devotees who are no longer living are said to have been accomplished sevaks. One seṭha who lived within the living memory of most adult devotees was regularly described as an exemplary sevak who showed great humility in the company of all

Vaiṣṇavas in spite of his great wealth and status. His sevā was not confined to the sect for he regarded all men as his brothers and earnestly campaigned to improve the atrocious conditions of the workers in the textile mills at Indore. Occasionally devotees praise the selfless service of others, though they almost invariably identify as true sevaks those with whom they are related in some way. One Brahman devotee singled out a temple priest as a true sevak on the grounds that he was a good medical practitioner who often gave him free medicines (see Chapter IV, p. 140).

Informants singled out five persons as true sevaks, all of whom happened to perform sohnī-sevā, meaning that they swept the floors of temple courtyards and outhouses. As one priest explained:

> A person who comes to do sevā should have so much bhāva that he will be ready to do sohnī-sevā if the temple is dirty.

Sohnī-sevā is generally considered to be a particularly sincere form of devotion precisely because in normal circumstances it is regarded as a menial and polluting task. Moreover, devotees who do sohnī-sevā work very early in the morning before Maṅgalā darshan when there are few devotees around to see them. The following example was brought to my attention by the son of a priest:

> A Kayastha lady has done sohnī-sevā for the last four years. She feels so much love in her sevā that she even hangs up the mukhiyā's bedding to air...out of pure love for Ṭhākurjī. She gets prasād at festivals and when there is manoratha, but not every day. This is what I mean by vāstavik-sevā. She comes to the temple before Maṅgalā and goes home after Rājbhog. Then she cleans her house, bathes and does sevā of her own Ṭhākurjī. At 5 p.m. she comes to the temple, sweeps...and listens to readings from the Vārtās. Nowadays Vaiṣṇavas want something in return for their daily work. Many of them only come for darshan when Mahārāja Shrī is here because they know that they will be given prasād. But this Kayastha lady does real sevā.

Conversely, those persons most susceptible to moral condemnation on the sevā yardstick occupy positions of some influence in the temple organisation, managers especially. As a standard of moral judgement, sevā turns upside down the ranking system that sets the powerful, the influential and those at the forefront of the Vaiṣṇava community, above those who remain humble

and inconspicuous.

At its simplest it can be said that the propensity to condemn the motives and behaviour of those wielding influence serves as a sanction working to temper the ambitions of those who are in a position to exploit the system in their own interests, and hence at the expense of other Vaiṣṇavas. In this sense gossip allegations framed in terms of the sevā idiom can be seen as serving to assert the collective values and interests of the sect and the local sectarian community. Yet to pursue this line of analysis alone would lead us to under-emphasise the internal tensions among ritual and administrative functionaries that are mainly expressed through gossip.

Managers and Priests

The cultural debate on the theme of altruism and selfishness is particularly apparent in the tensions that exist between manager and priest. In one sense the roles are quite distinct: a priest is a Brahman who serves the deity in the inner rooms of the temple, a manager is normally a Bania businessman who deals with administrative and financial matters. Managers accept the fact that Brahman priests have the necessary ritual qualifications which give them the exclusive right to perform bhītarī-sevā. Alternatively, Brahman priests accept the fact that as businessmen managers are proficient in the control of income and expenditure. But there is often some friction between priest and manager concerning their respective rights over the redistributive process. Each tends to suspect the other of 'taking more and giving less', which means, in short, that the priest may suspect the manager of not providing him with ingredients proportional to the amount received from donors in the form of cash offerings, and the manager may suspect the priest of not returning enough prasād, i.e. proportional to the amount of ingredients passed on to him in the first place. The fact that a manager can never enter the inner rooms to see what the priest is doing serves only to rouse his worst suspicions. It appears that the manager sometimes resents

the fact that the priest distributes prasād without receiving managerial sanction, whereas the priest resents managerial interference in what he considers to be part of his priestly duties. One priest described himself as a devotional servant (sevak) of the deity but complained that he was unjustly treated as a servant (naukar) of the Managing Committee:

> (Priest)
> We should have feelings for Ṭhākurjī's happiness. If we desire money we cannot do sevā. If we allow a man his freedom, then he can do sevā well. People should not interfere with the duties of the mukhiyā. Whatever the mukhiyā does is right.
>
> (Do people interfere?)
>
> Yes (names certain managers). There shouldn't be a master-servant relationship between the Managing Committee and the mukhiyā. If the Managing Committee gives orders to the mukhiyā, then bhāva becomes naukarī (service as a servant) so that he cannot do his sevā. A few days ago a man came to play mṛdaṅga (a kind of drum). I gave him some prasād. ... (a manager) asked me why I had given the drummer prasād. I told him that whatever I give, I give on my own behalf. He (the drummer) is doing good sevā and no-one should question my decisions.

And on another occasion:

> Recently a poor Vaiṣṇava widow who does much sevā by sewing Ṭhākurjī's clothes asked the munīm for some prasād of laḍḍū. But he refused her even though she works very hard in her sevā and couldn't afford to give a donation. I told the munīm to give her a laḍḍū and to take the same out of my own monthly allowance.

In recent years two of the havelīs have witnessed the 'dismissal' or 'resignation' of several chief priests in circumstances that remain controversial and which, by all reports, betoken tensions between priests and managers. Up until about fifty years ago, Temple C was privately administered by a family of Audīcha Brahmans. Then the family dedicated the deity and the temple to a Mahārāja who appointed a Managing Committee to supervise the temple in his absence. It is generally agreed that troubles began with the appointment of local managers:

> Previously the mukhiyās lived in the temple with their families and took full meals of prasād. But after the establishment of the Trust, the trustees began to restrict the amount of prasād which the mukhiyā could take for himself and his family. One mukhiyā (named) left after an

> argument with the trustees, and later another mukhiyā (named) left after an argument over prasād.

Some ten years ago the Mahārāja appointed a single manager in place of the Committee. A temple servant commented:

> The malīk (i.e. the Mahārāja) appointed one manager because the trustees were not doing their work. At every festival prasād worth Rs.11 to Rs.15 was sent to their homes. The malīk heard of this. The trustees didn't work for the temple but used to look after their own businesses. So the guru rebuked them and ordered that they be removed.

Yet another priest was supposedly 'dismissed' as a result of an altercation with the manager:

> A man gave a donation to the manager for a special Rājbhog, so the storekeeper gave extra ingredients to the mukhiyā. The mukhiyā didn't know that he had to prepare extra bhog so he prepared the usual amount. But there was already a plan to turn him out. It is customary to make 48 pūrīs from 1 kilogramme of flour. The mukhiyā used 2 kilogrammes of flour and made only 60 pūrīs. After the Vaiṣṇavas had taken prasād, the manager asked, 'Where are the remaining pūrīs?' And he accused him of stealing the flour and the ghee. Later the guru ordered that the mukhiyā be turned out.

The removal of the Managing Committee and the appointment of a single manager in its place is one of the main reasons given by informants for the success of the temple in recent years. Today it attracts by far the largest number of worshippers of all the havelīs in Ujjain and its darshans are visibly more lavish than those of its neighbours. The manager is said to have close contact with many wealthy merchants who send donations from as far afield as Gujarāt and Bombay. The success of the temple reflects favourably on both priests and manager.

In contrast, Temple B is badly in need of structural repairs, there are fewer full and part-time functionaries, numbers attending are comparatively low, and the sevā is noticeably less luxurious. The managers are constantly criticised for their lack of interest in the temple's affairs.

The difference between Temple C and Temple B can be seen as one of different styles of management (dictatorial/democratic). Attitudes towards the adhikārī of Temple C were highly ambivalent. He was often described as

a very powerful and obstinate person who always had his own way. It was said that no-one dare question his decisions and that the Mahārāja was prepared to delegate full authority to him on account of his highly efficient style of management and his total engrossment in his sevā. Yet he was also considered by some to be over ruthless in his dealings with devotees and functionaries. They also complained that he ran the temple like a business, treating temple-goers like customers. But many Vaiṣṇavas, though critical of his methods, also tolerated them on the principle of the 'ends justifying the means'. An efficient management and an impressive ritual programme attract many devotees who are prepared to give large donations in the knowledge that they will receive a fair amount of prasād (proportional to cash given) of the highest quality. But as is so often the case with dictatorial forms of management, all is centred on the personality of the individual manager, and one wonders at the resilience of the institution were he to leave. I should make it quite clear that although some Vaiṣṇavas were prepared to criticise this manager for his style of management, no-one doubted his honesty.

It was explained to me that the main advantage of a Managing Committee is that the members can keep an eye on one another so that no persons are left in a position in which they might be tempted to abuse the trust placed in them by the Mahārāja and the Vaiṣṇava community. It could also be said, however, that managers are fulfilling this informal aspect of their work so well that they are often working contrary to the more serious business of running the temple. The following analogy was made by a temple functionary and echoed by several informants:

> If a husband and wife can't agree on the running of their household, then how can it be organised efficiently? Similarly, if the managers can't agree with one another, then what becomes of the temple?

It would appear that members of the Managing Committee are particularly reluctant to take on the responsibility of making decisions unless they are assured of support to counter any allegations of mismanagement that may come their way as a result. In this respect one minor but nevertheless significant

event in the life of a local temple stands out. One of the managers called a meeting of the Committee and proposed that in future the more expensive pure ghee rather than the cheaper hydrogenated variety be used for the preparation of fried food offerings (sakharī bhog). It later transpired, however, that three members of the Committee had questioned his right to call a meeting at such short notice and had refused to offer any verbal indication of their opinions on the matter. The disappointed manager subsequently tried to gain the support of influential devotees, approaching them when they visited the temple for darshan. Some days later he announced that he had sent the munīm to purchase a supply of pure ghee without first obtaining the permission of the Committee.

A satisfactory explanation of this issue would require information on the internal politics of the Committee which I do not have, and details of hearsay concerning internal wranglings which it would not be fair of me to divulge. Nevertheless, something can be gleaned from the issue. The manager justified his decision to purchase pure ghee as follows. In the first place, he suggested that the others had opposed him entirely on the grounds of expense, whereas his own first thoughts had been for Ṭhākurjī who dislikes sweetmeats prepared in inferior ghee. Besides, why worry about expense? 'If we do use pure ghee, Ṭhākurjī will see to us.' In the second place, he stressed the fact that pure ghee is used in most havelīs and that devotees are more likely to give larger donations more regularly to those havelīs which prepare sweetmeats of a superior quality. The manager made it quite clear that he considered his move to buy pure ghee, and hence to improve the quality of the offerings, as an investment inasmuch as it would attract more cash donations for bhog leading to an increase in temple income. Indeed, many informants compared this temple unfavourably with others where pure ghee is used in bhog sevā.

Presumably, his opponents had reasonable justifications on the grounds of expense. 'Pure ghee means fewer sweets,' said one. Nevertheless, as far

as I could tell, opinions were not readily expressed on their side. After all, it was up to the recalcitrant manager who had ordered the purchase of pure ghee to justify his actions in the knowledge that he would eventually be called to account. After the next Committee meeting it soon became apparent that the dispute was far from over. The other managers had demanded to see the account books that he had been keeping, much to his annoyance.

Conclusion

Over forty years ago C. Wright Mills argued that rather than being fixed elements in an individual, 'motives are the terms with which interpretation of conduct by social actors proceeds'.[8] He added that different institutional situations are associated with different vocabularies of motive appropriate to their respective behaviour patterns; also that the avowal and imputation of motives is concomitant with the speech form known as the question: motives are imputed and avowed as answers to questioned conduct.

Within the context of the temples of the Vallabha Sect the dominant institutionally recognised idiom for motive avowal and imputation is sevā which implies two opposed alternatives: altruism and selfishness. What is distinctive about sevā is that it denotes a form of action as well as the attitudinal orientation of the actor, though the actor's motives are fundamental in determining whether a given act constitutes real sevā or merely a pretence of sevā. The moral status of an actor's behaviour is ideally assessed on the basis of the motives imputed to the actor and not necessarily on the outward form which his behaviour takes.

The majority of devotees belonging to the Vallabha Sect in Ujjain are members of the merchant castes and known by the general appelation 'Bania'. As a cultural stereotype the term Bania implies a cluster of motives and forms of conduct based on a widespread assumption that Banias are totally absorbed in the pursuit of wealth to the extent that they are prepared to engage in corrupt and anti-social activities without the slightest twinges of conscience in order to acquire it. Of course so-called Banias do not regard themselves

in the same disparaging light, though many would agree that they have an innate knack of making money and that they enjoy working in business. They are particularly suspicious of the motives of other Banias and non-Banias whom they regard in much the same way as non-Banias tend to regard Banias.

Viewed in the context of the sevā idiom, business performed with the sole intention of acquiring personal wealth is mundane and selfish. But the businessman who dedicates himself, his belongings, his future actions and wealth to Lord Krishna becomes a true sevak. Business conduct is converted and consecrated through an act of dedication into a disinterested spiritual activity. The outward form of the activity remains the same, the mind and motives of the actor are thought to change. The businessman goes about his business totally absorbed in his love for Krishna rather than working for his own personal benefit.

Overt business practices are not necessarily open to condemnation on the sevā yardstick since business can be a genuine expression of sevā. All depends on the motives of the devotee (as imputed by others). But it is widely assumed and voiced that certain devotees behave as sevaks and present themselves as sevaks even though they are secretly harbouring selfish motives. Hence most businessmen who seek and achieve prominent positions in the temple administration are suspected of utilising their positions of influence and power in furthering their own business interests or else of seeking the prestige which the position brings. Similarly, businessmen who are fully socialised in the values associated with the doing of good business are suspicious of the motives and conduct of others, particularly priests, other managers, munīms and storekeepers. The traits associated with the Bania stereotype and the types of conduct which Banias suspect in others are all evoked within the terms of the devotional idiom of the sect and are found to be contrary to the spirit of that devotional idiom and hence to the common interests of the Puṣṭimārgi community, which are based on the lofty principles of selfless service, mutual help, generosity and fair shares.

Managers are particularly prone to allegations of un-sevā-like activities and must therefore endeavour to protect their reputations by avowing their honest intentions, by obtaining support and by denouncing those who are likely to denounce them. All of this is done principally through the medium of gossip which has the advantage of avoiding any direct face-to-face conflict which would be contrary to the spirit of bhakti and business. If managers fail to convince others of their sincerity and the Mahārāja is 'informed' and becomes convinced of the need to take action, then the latter may either dismiss the Committee altogether (though his legal rights of taking such an action may be questioned) or he may carry out a Committee reshuffle. Managers are threatened with the disgrace of being removed from office under a cloud of suspicion, and several such clouds still linger.

The more prosperous businessmen are expected to help significantly in the maintenance of the temple deity by giving cash donations regularly; otherwise they are likely to be gossiped about for being miserly. And yet, as I mentioned earlier, they seem reluctant to give too regularly and too generously. There are several possible reasons; one is that they are reluctant to hand over their hard-earned wealth to temple functionaries whom they suspect of diverting donations for their own ends or of squandering them. Devotees were prepared to give more cash to Temple C because the sevā was visibly very impressive, the prasād was of the highest quality and there was a single full-time manager known for his strictness in the supervision of accounts and functionaries. In other words, the devotee could give money to Temple C with some confidence that it would be well-utilised. Another reason why businessmen hold back is that they do not wish to be duped or said to have been duped and hence made to look 'soft' in their dealings. In some cases donors exercise extreme caution by attempting to oversee as much of the appropriation of their donations as possible. This means that they will purchase all of the necessary ingredients themselves rather than trust their cash to functionaries. Furthermore, values of parsimony are not

conducive to the giving of extravagant offerings unless giving is considered to be a worthwhile investment. Giving too much to the temple deity has its disadvantages. Businessmen are not prepared to advertise their wealth lest they catch the eye of the taxman or of those rivals whose gossip allegations of ill-earned wealth would appear to be all the more convincing. There is a point at which the conduct of the real sevak and that of the successful businessman merge: both wish to keep themselves out of the public eye, the one seeking anonymity through humility, the other because it makes good business sense.

But whereas the ideal sevak is one who seeks the company of like-minded souls, sharing whenever he can in an intimate meal of the consecrated leavings, the merchant-devotee tends to avoid as far as possible social entanglements beyond the domestic group, particularly those which involve commensality. As a devotee, the merchant is expected to serve Lord Krishna by making offerings. In this way he enters into a commensal relationship with God along with all members of the Vaiṣṇava collectivity. And yet his commercial good sense warns him against the dangers of obligation and counter-obligation established by feasting. In practice, a compromise emerges. Prominent businessmen-devotees tend to restrict the nature of their participation as donors. Whereas they take part in the large communal prasād feasts financed by the pooled contributions of numerous devotees, such as the feast held on Vallabhācārya's birthday at the Baiṭhak, they seldom sponsor large feasts individually, nor do they attend temple feasts sponsored by other merchants. Any temple feasts which they do sponsor as manorathīs are generally small affairs, often attended by Brahmans, and not widely advertised. Most such manorathīs have prasād discreetly delivered to their homes where it is distributed among their families. Hence, although the institution of manoratha provides an ideal opportunity for devotees to earn reputations as generous providers, most merchants appear to temper their involvement in public rituals thus keeping their reputations unsung yet unsullied.[9]

The ideal pattern of moral relations which devotees formally present

as defining the Puṣṭimārgi community in Ujjain and the etiquette of interpersonal relations which this implies are not coterminous with reality, rather the model applies to the sectarian notion of the close-knit society of the righteous, the satsang, as preserved in sectarian tradition. The Puṣṭimārgis of Ujjain are not a close-knit community; they have differing interests. Or rather as merchants the majority have similar interests which are discrete and family centred. It is this that prevents them from coming together in a context of open cooperation and complete mutual trust.

In Chapter IV I explained that the notion of sevā as disinterested service is not restricted to the Vallabha Sect but also occurs in a variety of secular contexts: among politicians, social workers, doctors and close kin. Mayer's study of sevā in a political context reveals its use as a political motto. He points out that true sevā is that which is unrecognised by the public, meaning that it is applied to a situation where it cannot by definition be achieved (1981). But whereas sevā in the public setting is acknowledged as only one of several modes of action,[10] albeit the most prestigious, sevā in Puṣṭimārga is the highest and ideally the only form of action as far as the devotee is concerned. Moreover, as a form of devotional worship, sevā is much more elaborately defined than it is as a form of public service.

In this chapter I have focused specifically on devotional notions of action set alongside commercial notions of action and I have observed the reaction. On the one hand, sevā as the dominant spiritual idiom encompasses a mundane, even anti-social, form of behaviour and transforms it into a sacred pursuit. On the other hand, business action always threatens to corrupt sevā from within leaving the outward form as no more than an elegant pretence. The relationship between business interest and devotional disinterest in the Indian context promises to be an interesting field for further study; but this must be left to others.

Postscript

Motives provide answers to questioned behaviour. They are also a subject for profound theological and philosophical speculation. It may be said of a thief that he steals because his motives are selfish, but why do persons harbour selfish motives? The answers to such ultimate questions also vary from one institutional context to another. Why, then, do some devotees allegedly perpetrate such selfish acts of 'corruption' as I have described above?

I had no need to approach informants with the intention of deliberately eliciting answers to this question. Many mentioned in passing that persons are inevitably frail and hence unable to resist temptations in the present Degenerate Age. One word which regularly arose in this context was the verb bhūlnā, meaning 'to err, to make a mistake'. Former priests who had allegedly misappropriated food ingredients had 'made a mistake', so had munīms who had misappropriated cash. Managers, in particular, by virtue of the fact that they hold positions of influence and trust within the redistributive system, are considered to be all the more likely to 'make a mistake'. It is important to grasp the precise meaning of this verb. Blame is not entirely placed on the person who allegedly makes a mistake. It is not simply that an individual commits an offence either deliberately or unwittingly, rather he usually knows what he is doing but he is still tempted to do it, and, being weak, like the majority of humankind, he cannot help but fall for the bait. As was so often the case when discussing moral issues I was told a story which is well worth repeating:

> Once upon a time Lord Rām was presiding over his court when he heard a noise at the door. He asked Lakṣmaṇ to see who was there. Lakṣmaṇ did so and returned saying that no-one was at the door. Rām asked him to go a second time and again Lakṣmaṇ returned saying that nobody was outside. Then Rām told him a third time, but Lakṣmaṇ returned with the same news, adding that he had only seen a dog. Rām ordered Lakṣmaṇ to lead the dog into the court and he addressed the dog: 'Why have you come here?' The dog explained that he had been lying across a path when a Brahman had approached and beaten him with a stick. Now he wished for proper redress for his grievance.

> So Rām called for the Brahman and prepared to judge the case. First of all he asked the dog why he had been lying across the path. The dog replied 'I am only a beast, I lie wherever I wish because I don't know where I should and should not lie.' Then Rām asked the Brahman why he had beaten the dog and the Brahman replied 'I beat him because he was lying across my path.' Then Rām asked him if at the time he had considered whether the obstruction had been a man or a beast. The Brahman had to admit that he had not considered the matter.
>
> Rām then put the case before his court advising his ministers to suggest a fitting punishment for the Brahman's crime. One said that the Brahman's hands should be cut off. Another said that the Brahman should be reborn a dog. But Rām was not convinced of the appropriateness of these sentences. Finally he asked the dog what punishment he thought would be most suitable. 'Let the Brahman be given the job of a temple storekeeper,' said the dog. The ministers were unable to see how this action would constitute a punishment until the dog added, 'Once I was a temple storekeeper and like such persons I found myself tempted to take those things over which I had control. And so I was reborn a dog. If the Brahman is made a storekeeper then surely he will be reborn a dog.'

Another temple-goer explained that over the years he had gradually come to the conclusion that the administrative troubles in some of the haveliīs, especially those concerning the alleged embezzlement of cash donations and food ingredients, were all part and parcel of Krishna's mysterious līlā. Lord Krishna is constantly testing his sevaks by putting attractive things in their way and they are constantly falling for his tricks, for so the saying goes:

> The poison of Ṭhākurjī is sweet...

Notes to Chapter IX

1. This subject was treated historically by Weber in The Religion of India (1958, pp. 77f.).

2. I should add that this rather sweeping hypothesis remains as yet untested and calls for a full examination of the historical data, a task which is beyond the scope of the present study. Indeed, this chapter specifically identifies kinds of friction between sectarian and business interests at a micro-level, although these do not necessarily disprove the idea of an overall symbiosis in a general, long-term perspective.

3. I was often advised by non-Bania informants not to waste time and effort asking Banias about religious matters on account of their reputed ignorance in this field. Several retailers whom I interviewed admitted that they had only the slightest knowledge of the history and theology of Puṣṭimārga and thoughtfully suggested that I might do better to seek information elsewhere, particularly from Brahmans. This proved somewhat frustrating since much of the information which I was seeking did not demand a specialised knowledge.

4. Occasionally, this impeded research. The heads of some business families refused to answer questions on business or family matters, even though they were particularly keen to know about my own financial circumstances. Initially, I was rather perplexed when these Mahājans declared that they could not remember the numbers and names of persons living in their own households!

5. I am reminded here of an occasion when I accompanied a Brahman devotee to the shop of a cloth merchant to purchase a dhoti. Knowing the shopkeeper to be a fellow initiate, the Brahman greeted him with the Vaiṣṇava salutation 'Jaya Shrī Kṛṣṇa!', but the shopkeeper ignored the greeting, leaving his son to deal with the customer.

6. Meanness is itself a form of misappropriation in the sense that the so-called miser is not utilising the wealth that he has promised to Lord Krishna for the service of Lord Krishna.

7. Unfortunately, the anthropologist cannot, like the novelist, state that all characters and events are purely fictitious. Nevertheless, in the interests of protecting the anonymity of informants, I have avoided giving details of many instances of alleged misbehaviour. The extracts are brief amalgams of some allegations which can be described as 'typical' and should not therefore be attributed to particular individuals

and situations. I should stress yet again that I am dealing with allegations, which are sometimes highly imaginative, and not with actual incidents.

8. The article, 'Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive', first appeared in 1940 (see bibliography).

9. Cf. 'Even the well-known devoutness of the Baniya takes a passive form: the endowment of temples or religious shrines, rather than the financing of religious feasts and group rituals' (Fox, 1969:59).

10. E.g. The public may be quite prepared to accept a politician who takes what it considers to be a reasonable return for his work, and perhaps even a dictatorial politician who profits a great deal by his work, so long as he is considered by the public to be working in its interests.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION:

THE NOURISHER AND THE NOURISHED

At the outset I stated my aims in general terms: 1) to make a contribution to an ethnographic record that is seriously deficient in accounts of the major Hindu devotional sects, and 2) to improve our somewhat meagre knowledge of social and cultural manifestations of sectarianism in the Indian setting. With regard to the first, I have now presented a detailed account of temple life among initiates of one of the most popular of the established bhakti sects. Temple worship in Puṣṭimārga is typically flamboyant and energetic mainly by virtue of the fact that it makes the fullest possible use of musical, culinary and decorative modes of spiritual expression. Implicit in the second aim is the belief that many of the themes covered here are of wider theoretical relevance; in particular I should mention the institution of 'guru-ship' and the phenomenon of 'guru-worship', the nature of the food offering, sacred food and commensality, moral and spiritual dimensions of the pure-impure idiom, the rationale underlying image worship, and bhakti and the relationship between mind and body, motivation and action.

I began by defining the Indian sect with reference to the ethnographic category 'sampradāya' which denotes a channel or vehicle for the transmission of a sacred culture from generation to generation by means of an uninterrupted succession of preceptors. The preceptorial 'lineage' is traced to a founder who is usually identified as an incarnation of divinity (avatāra). At the same time I made it clear that I see no reason why the Vaishnavite sampradāyas should not be considered as sects for purposes of sociological comparison so long as we are prepared to acknowledge certain features which are distinctively Indian. Most important of all is the pivotal position of the guru in the sampradāya and the significance of the guru 'lineage' and the guru-disciple relationship in determining its organisational structure.

In Chapter III I suggested, following Dumont, that the guru-disciple relationship provided the bridge which enabled the renouncer, qua guru, to re-establish contact with men-in-the-world, qua disciples, with the result that the role of guru-renouncer was informed with new authority while the relationship with the disciple acquired a new meaning. The great medieval preceptors, or rather their spiritual successors, became influential leaders of large sects having control over vast wealth in the form of endowments, while as bestowers of divine grace, they became objects of highly emotional cults of loving adoration. We have seen that Vallabhācārya's descendants have been treated with the utmost reverence by their disciples on account of the belief that they partake of the spiritual genius of their celebrated ancestor who is himself revered as an incarnation of the mouth of Lord Krishna. Generally speaking, the guru-renouncers emerged as the chief protagonists of the bhakti synthesis originally expounded in the Bhagavad Gītā, of the idea that the householder could achieve salvation, conceived as communion with a personal god, not by forsaking worldly actions and adopting the lifestyle of an ascetic, but by renouncing the fruits of actions by dedicating them to the divine:

> Whatever be thy work, thine eating, thy sacrifice, thy gift, thy mortification, make thou it an offering to me, O son of Kuntī (Bhagavad Gītā, IX, 27, in Macnicol, 1938: 257).

The version of the bhakti synthesis adopted by the gurus and disciples of Puṣṭimārga has been remarkably thorough. For one thing, unlike the majority of the Vaishnavite sects, both preceptors and their disciples are householders, while the way of asceticism is avoided completely. For another, Puṣṭimārga places great stress on the notion of dedication by encouraging the lavish and assiduous worship of its temple deities. It is not simply that the devotee is expected to renounce attachment to worldly possessions, rather he or she should make a positive attempt to acquire the most beautiful and valuable treasures of this world with the deliberate intention of utilising them in the loving service of Lord Krishna. From the point of view of the outsider, Puṣṭimārga appears to be markedly 'this-worldly' and 'materialistic' in its

orientation. Indeed, in this thesis I have been mainly concerned with the interpretation of this elaborate form of worship as an embodiment or materialisation of the finer sentiments of devotion. The notion of a close correspondence between the spiritual-emotional and the material-physical dimensions is highly developed in Puṣṭimārga and it is as a result of the examination of this correspondence that I have managed to present the rationale underlying many aspects of temple worship. It now remains for me to summarise the principal findings in this respect.

It is convenient to begin the summary with a consideration of the concept of puṣṭi from which the Path of Grace takes its name. The word is derived from the Sanskrit poṣaṇa, the meaning of which is, in the sense intended by Vallabha, apparent in a statement in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa which reads 'poṣaṇam tadanugraha' , or 'the grace (of Lord Krishna) is poṣaṇa'. Barz, following Monier-Williams, expands on this meaning:

> The word poṣaṇa, which signifies the act of nourishing, fostering, preserving, or supporting, is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root puṣ which expresses the action of being nourished, well fed, healthy and the action of thriving, increasing, growing larger, prospering. The basic idea expressed by the root puṣ is one of the arrival at a condition of physical prosperity and success; but, the root puṣ develops further in meaning until it also signifies the act of causing something to flourish, the act of giving strength or support to someone or something, the act of developing or promoting something. (1976: 86).

Hence, the word puṣṭi, which is the same as poṣaṇa, is taken by Vallabha and his followers to be synonymous with the divine grace (anugraha) which nourishes, strengthens and supports the soul of the devotee enabling him to tread the path leading to communion with Krishna. In this Degenerate Age when the majority of souls are lean and sickly, among the most fortunate are those puṣṭi souls that grow healthy and thrive on the grace of Lord Krishna. Puṣṭimārga is essentially the path (mārga) of spiritual nourishment, the Path of Grace.

Nevertheless, there are, and have been critics of the sect who prefer a less rarefied interpretation. For them puṣṭi means sensual nourishment, a condition of being well fed and prosperous, of replenishment in both

material and physical senses. I mentioned in the Introduction that some nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars made much of the 'this-worldly' tendencies of the sect by referring to its followers as the 'Epicureans of India' and their doctrine as 'the way of eating, drinking, and enjoyment'. I have noticed a similar play on the word among some non-sectaries in Ujjain who tend to associate Puṣṭimārga with the uncomplimentary stereotype applied to its merchant following, in which case puṣṭi implies the hoarding of wealth, or, with reference to shopkeepers of somewhat rotund appearance, a condition of being sated with the sacred food.

And yet even if we set aside such depreciatory remarks, it is abundantly clear from the subject matter of this study that the concept is something more than an isolated metaphor in a Sanskrit text. There appears to be a marked correspondence between spiritual and physical nourishment in Sampradāyik tradition with food serving as the chief mediator. In other words, whereas food provides for the sustenance of the body, grace provides for the sustenance of the soul. Food and grace are subtly commingled in prasād, the sacred food. By tasting prasād the devotee absorbs the grace of Krishna. Just as the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and Vallabha employed a word pertaining to physical nourishment in order to describe a spiritual condition, so the spiritual condition itself, as well as the means of arriving at that condition, is expressed in worship in the form of material things and physical actions with the result that the things and actions themselves, in this instance the receiving and tasting of prasād, are invested with a special sanctity which is only apparent to those favoured souls having the appropriate spiritual insight. From the time of Viṭṭhalnāthjī, the followers of the Path of Grace have gone to great lengths in the appropriation of the things of this world as media for expressing, sharing and savouring the teeming sentiments of līlā. Whether we explain this in terms of the materialisation of the spiritual world or the spiritualisation of the material world is, in the final analysis, irrelevant for the two worlds are really one and the same, the distinction lies in the subjective state of mind of the observer - laukika or alaukika.[1]

We should not overlook the fact that the whole process of nourishment is initiated by the guru, who, as divine intermediary, gives the soul its first infusion of grace thus preparing it for communion with Krishna. Here the sacred formula, mantra transmitted from the guru to the devotee, has the same function as the sacred food. Similarly, it is the guru who initiates the process of transformation of an image into a svarūp by making it pusti. The image is bathed in the five sacred substances, offered prasād, and thereby imbued with the vital grace of Krishna.

Krishna is both the nourisher and the nourished, nourished by those very souls in which he becomes manifest. This aspect of his divine personality as well as the active role of the devotee is vividly demonstrated in the worship of temple images. In Chapter IV I explained how the devotional idiom of sevā not only designates an elaborate system of worship involving various kinds of ritual acts and items, but also an attitude of selfless love and affection for the object of worship. The highest form of sevā is purely mental and hence invisible on the phenomenal plane. Most sevaks, however, perform sevā by means of their wealth and physical bodies, although such efforts are no more than a sham if the sevak does not entertain genuine thoughts of disinterested loving devotion. The sevak assumes one of several attitudes towards Krishna, either of a servant, friend, lover or parent, so that he can participate in the emotions (bhāvas) experienced by the gopas and gopīs of the Braj līlā. We have seen that the dominant devotional attitude in Puṣṭimārga is vātsalya-bhāva in which the sevak worships Lord Krishna by assuming the personality of Mother Yashodā and by caring for the deity as his (or her) own child. For many sevaks the maternal approach to the divine represents the quintessence of devotion as selfless love and concern for a personal god conceived as an innocent and wide-eyed child. Through sevā the sevak nurtures the infant god as a mother nurtures her child and as a cow nurtures her calf.

The food offered to the deity, bhog, is also conceived as a medium of spiritual nourishment. By lovingly and carefully preparing food while

joyfully anticipating the moment when it will be relished by Krishna, the cook impregnates the items with his loving feelings which are duly conveyed to Krishna via the offering. On receiving the offering, Krishna proceeds to enjoy it by taking a portion and leaving some for his worshippers. The consecrated offering, prasād, thus combines the devotional sentiments of the devotee, consisting of joy (ānanda) and love (prema), with the ānanda experienced by Krishna on relishing the love of his devotee and the prema which he feels for his devotee as a consequence. Hence, on retrieving and tasting the offering, the devotee reabsorbs his own divine qualities made manifest and augmented by the addition of Krishna's bliss and love. Prasād invigorates the soul thereby enabling it to become increasingly aware of its divine identity and its ability to enter into the divine līlā.

The significance of food as a vehicle for the transmission of subjective emotions and qualities was discussed in detail in Chapter VII. In the case of food dedicated to Krishna, the utmost care must be taken to ensure that the emotions established in bhog will be pleasing to the god. The same rationale reveals why certain foods are unacceptable in sevā. I have argued that it is not necessarily the qualities 'in' certain edibles which render them displeasing to Krishna, rather the qualities may be extrinsic to the foods in question and intrinsic to the person who regards them. Hence, a water melon (normally prohibited in sevā) is quite innocuous in and of itself, that is unless the person who slashes it with a knife to reveal the red meaty interior has the fleeting and repulsive thought that his actions are not unlike those of the blood-sacrificer.

The notion that feelings and thoughts are established in food is extended to all items utilised in worship. Flowers, ornaments, clothes, perfumes, coloured powders, doors, rooms, courtyards, cows etc., are identified with the paraphernalia and sacred geography of the celestial Braj. Every item is an embodied feeling (bhāvanā); together they cover the entire gamut of divine sentiments experienced in the ecstacy of līlā. Sevaks also, by using their minds and bodies in sevā, take on the personalities of the divine

participants in līlā. This sanctification of the phenomenal world spreads beyond the temple precincts and into the 'secular' lives of devotees such that seemingly mundane actions and possessions are assigned a meaningful place and function in the cosmic process. Even the efforts of the businessman are sanctified, along with his earnings, so long as he does his work disinterestedly by mentally dedicating his every action, transaction and acquisition to Krishna.

It is largely in the mental sense that I have explained the condition of enhanced ritual purity which priests assume before approaching the temple deity. Aparas is not merely regarded as a state of quasi-physical purity pertaining to the gross body, but more significantly it is a state of spiritual purity of the subtle body in which the sevak's mind is completely engrossed in Krishna and therefore free from all worldly concerns. Pure thoughts are transmitted to the deity via the sevak's material offerings and physical actions; but if he allows his mind to dwell on worldly concerns his aparas is destroyed and he must leave his sevā immediately, otherwise his profane thoughts would taint the offerings causing Ṭhākurjī some distress, perhaps even a stomach-ache.

The distinction between the phenomenal world and the spiritual world is elegantly expressed in the conceptual opposition of the laukika and the alaukika. Essentially, the terms indicate two kinds of attitudinal orientation and two modes of perception. The pure mental attitude of the priest during his sojourn in aparas is alaukika, as also is his feeling that he becomes a participant in līlā. For those individuals with laukika eyes, the havelī is of no special sanctity being in appearance not unlike any other large house; but for devotees with alaukika eyes, it is the house of Nand Bābā, Krishna's foster-father, while its various rooms and courtyards are identified with the rustic landscape of the celestial Braj, the stage of līlā. Similarly, for those who have been blessed with alaukika vision, the darshan is an intensely emotional and edifying experience; on peering into the small and sometimes dimly lit innermost chamber, they see not just a stone image but

an actual manifestation of the child Krishna. Indeed, it is significant that the word darshan, which implies 'seeing' or 'the realisation of ultimate truth', focuses on the subject - the person who sees - rather than the object - that which is seen (see Chapter V, footnote 13). For the devotee with alaukika vision the external world becomes a projection of his internal divinity such that the heavenly Braj exists all around him.

The same spiritual logic helps to explain the conceptual status of the image as Krishna's 'Own Form' (svarūp).[2] I mentioned above that the svarūp is initially vitalised or 'made puṣṭi' by a Mahārāja who infuses it with the grace of Krishna. But it is also the case that devotees are considered to be essential agents in the transformation. In Chapter V, I defined the svarūp as a depository of the loving emotions (bhāva) of its worshippers while making special reference to the term nidhi, or 'treasure store', used to designate the pre-eminent images originally worshipped by Vallabhācārya and Viṭṭhalnāthjī. By performing the sevā of the svarūp - feeding, clothing, serenading, and caring for it by all means - the loving emotions of the worshipper are deposited in the image, the repository of bhāva.

> Shrī Vallabhāchārya says, 'Those very sentiments and feelings which are present in the devotee himself are established in the Deity in worship' (Bhatt, 1979: 90).

The relationship between sevak and svarūp is essentially dialectical. The devotion of the sevak is 'externalised' through acts of worship, 'objectified' in the svarūp, and then 'internalised' or re-experienced at the time of darshan. Bhog and prasād are tangible manifestations of this flowing back-and-forth of bhāva. This helps to explain why it is that some svarūpas are treated with a special reverence; i.e. because they are stores of the finest sentiments experienced by the most celebrated sevaks of past times, among them Vallabha himself. Once the svarūp has been made puṣṭi, the transformation effected is permanent such that the sevā must never be delayed or interrupted, otherwise, as with any child that is neglected, the svarūp will despair for want of maternal nourishment and affection.[3]

This particular interpretation of the conceptual status of the image

in Puṣṭimārga is clearly alien to Christian, Muslim and Judaic traditions. Thinking more specifically of the Indian context, one wonders whether or not this highly developed emphasis on image worship is a peculiarity of Puṣṭimārga, or is it that we have not as yet broached the subject of image worship in India with any seriousness, being content with vague statements that worshippers regard their images as 'representations of divinity', or 'repositories of divine power', while adding little else by way of explanation?

The notion of the svarūp as a depository of wealth brings to mind another aspect of the materialisation of the spiritual, viz. the link between material superabundance and devotional intensity. I mentioned the reputation of 'commendable extravagance' associated with the temple of the pre-eminent nidhi-svarūp at Nāthdwāra with its cornucopian storehouse, and the splendour of the Annakūṭ festival with its large heap of boiled rice surrounded by some fifty odd varieties of edibles. The 'Mountain of Food' is a blatant manifestation of the pooled sentiments of the Vaiṣṇava collectivity. By sharing the prasād of Annakūṭ, each and every Vaiṣṇava and Lord Krishna partake of each others' divine qualities thereby demonstrating the essential oneness and sameness of nature of the multiplicity of divine souls in relation to Krishna. Such is the spiritual dimension of the redistributive economy of the temple.

As with all Puṣṭimārgi rituals, the ultimate objective is the intensification of the emotional experience (bhāva), raising it to the level of rasa, that pure sentiment of disinterested love for Krishna tasted by his eternal companions in līlā. This is to be achieved by the performance of sevā with its elaborate culinary, decorative and musical modes of expression.

It is within the context of this entire theme that we can come to a fuller understanding of the significance of Puṣṭimārga as a sampradāya, or vehicle for the transmission of a sacred tradition. Just as the methods of worship and material accoutrements of the sacred tradition provide the means and the media for spiritual intercourse between devotee and divine, just so the organisation of the sampradāya, in virtue of the fact that it preserves

the sacred tradition, is the physical medium for the transmission of divine grace, via the dynasty of preceptors, and for the expression of devotion, via the worship of the divine svarūpas attached to that dynasty.

In the penultimate chapter I considered the problem concerning the relationship between sevā as an attitude of mind and sevā as an act or system of worship. In the latter sense, sevā makes thorough use of external actions and things as a means of expressing selfless loving devotion. And yet the fact that a devotee goes through the appropriate motions of devotional worship does not necessarily mean that his motives are genuinely disinterested, indeed the ostentatious performance of such worship is likely to arouse suspicions that it is selfishly motivated. Sevā provides the principal idiom for temple gossip much of which concerns the misappropriation of the items that circulate in the redistributive system. In temple gossip one detects the assumption of an underlying contradiction: that a system of worship that makes such effective use of services and valuable items in the expression of selfless loving devotion is particularly open to abuse from persons who would exploit it for their own selfish ends.

In the attempt to interpret the various aspects of temple worship much stress has been placed on their meaning as embodiments of inner feelings and emotions which are ideally spontaneous and altruistic. But at the same time it has been made quite clear that sevā is a highly standardised system of worship that has hardly changed since the time of Viṭṭhalnāthjī. The functionaries in the havelīs have acquired a reputation for punctiliousness, particularly with regard to the maintenance of purity while preparing food. I have described these finicking rules and observances at some length, including those pertaining to the different categories of food distinguished according to their respective susceptibilities to impurity. It is partly as a result of this reputation that some outsiders view the havelīs as centres of strict Brahmanical orthodoxy. A comment made by Pocock, evidently with Puṣṭimārga in mind, is particularly apt in this respect:

> I seem to note in highly organized sects a reduction of caste regulations such that, although still practised, they are endorsed by the theology of the sect. This is one way of looking at the situation. Equally we must recognize two developments: first, the authority of the sect strengthens these regulations when secular influences would otherwise weaken them, and secondly, if these secular influences do succeed, sect remains as almost the sole repository of caste (1973:95).

To a large extent this development is to be regarded as a consequence of what I have called the bhakti synthesis, or as Pocock goes on to explain:

> The sect, the individual guru, comes from and points towards the caste-transcending world. The message of renunciation is transmitted to the laity, provided that it accommodates the language and values of caste. In its turn the sect becomes the sole guardian of that language as the world of caste begins to fall apart (ibid., p.95).

In the above extracts Pocock presents a neat summary of 'institutionalization' in the Indian context. At a more general level of analysis it has been suggested that one of the principal dilemmas of 'institutionalization' is the tendency for rituals which originated as expressions of the heartfelt emotions and attitudes of their participants to develop into a sheer formalism with the result that participation loses much of its spontaneity and sincerity of expression. As patterns of worship become standardised, worship itself comes to be regarded as a dutiful observance of rules and a superficial respect for tradition having no meaningful connection with the attitudes and dispositions of worshippers (O'Dea, 1964). Devotees of the Path of Grace mean much the same thing when they point out that the path of strict conformity to orthodox Vedic rules and injunctions (Maryādāmārga) is quite unsuitable in the present age since human souls have become too ignorant to understand the meaning and purpose of its rituals. For the same reason, worship performed in Maryādā temples, known as pūjā, is said to be of limited efficacy because worshippers are so preoccupied with the correct performance of prescribed actions and the precise repetition of conventional formulae that they have no real knowledge of the meaning of these actions and formulae or of their ultimate spiritual significance. Conversely, Puṣṭimārgis distinguish sevā from pūjā by describing their own form of worship as a natural extension of the spontaneous feelings of the sevak, unimpeded by petty formalities. All

depends on the attitude of the sevak. Some of my priestly informants often stressed that too nice a concern for rules of purity can be detrimental to sevā because it means that the attention of the sevak is diverted away from the real Subject of his worship thus interrupting and impeding the effortless outflowing of love for Krishna which is the essence of pure devotion.

In view of the highly 'routinized' character of temple worship in Puṣṭimārga, it might be objected that in this exposition I have overestimated the significance of lofty moods and ideals which would have been more relevant to the pristine experience of the Sampradāya than to the present. In reply, I would point out that inasmuch as the system of worship as practised in the temple represents a particularly elaborate objectification of the sentiments and motivations of the charismatic response, then these sentiments and motivations remain as essential elements of that system of worship, informing it with meaning. The fact that priests in many Vallabha temples appear to be obsessed with the maintenance of purity may well be explained in terms of 'institutionalization', or more specifically as an accommodation of the sect to the values of caste. But this should not lead us to interpret rituals involving purification by the application of principles that are completely alien to the spirit of sevā. The distortions which can arise from such an approach were exposed in Chapters VII and VIII in our discussions of the significance of the offering and of commensality. The relationship between devotee and Krishna cannot be understood in terms of a difference in hierarchical status between members of different castes.

As for the deep-seated psychological moods and motivations experienced by participants in temple worship, that is another study. For devotees of Puṣṭimārga such inner experiences are alaukika, the privilege of puṣṭi souls.

NOTES TO CHAPTER X

1. Perhaps there is a useful comparison to be drawn between the emphasis on food and feasting in Puṣṭimārga and the emphasis on erotic love and sexual intercourse among certain sects of Vaiṣṇava and Tāntrik influence. Commensality and sexual intercourse are principal means of communion, physical or spiritual. I am thinking in particular of Dimock's study of the literature of the Vaiṣṇava-Sahajiyās of Bengal. For the Sahajiyās 'the cosmic embrace is embodied in the human' (1966:15).

2. As far as I know, the use of the term svarūp as a technical term denoting a temple or domestic image is a peculiarity of Puṣṭimārga. Cf. 'Svarūpa is also a Vaiṣṇava-sahajiyā technical term meaning the true divine essence of a person as opposed to his rūpa or physical form' (ibid., p.48, fn. 17).

3. N.B. An image does not suddenly become replete with the divine essence, rather the process, which is initiated by the guru and thereafter taken over by devotees, is continuous and unending. To use an appropriate analogy, the svarūp is like a bottomless container into which devotees pour their emotions. Hence, its divinity is being continuously enhanced.

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